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Institute of Latin-American Studies
Latin-American Studies, VIII

The Epic of the Chaco: Marshal Estigarribia's Memoirs of The Chaco War 1932-1935

EDITED AND ANNOTATED
BY
PABLO MAX YNSFRAN

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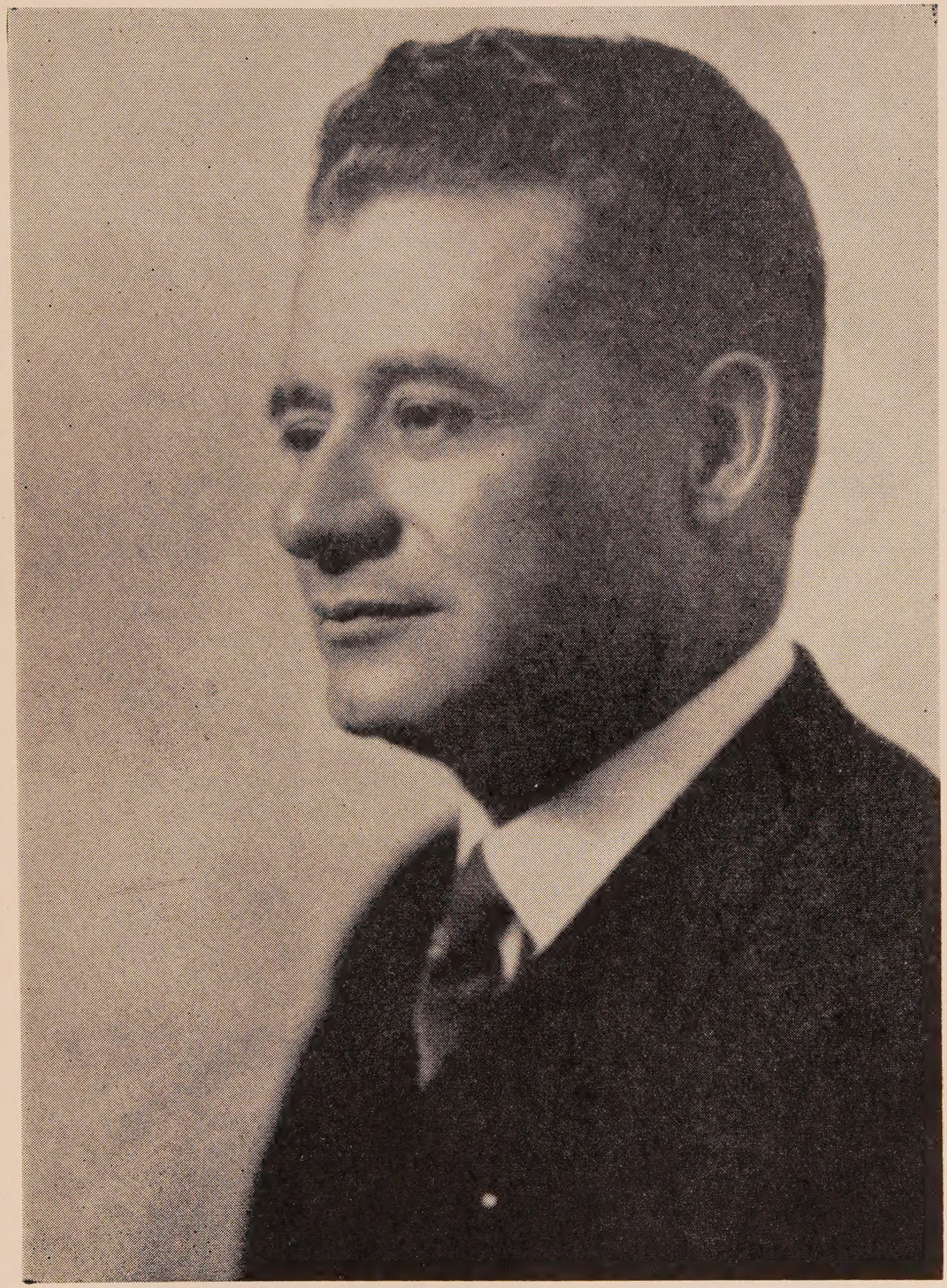

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Marshal Estigarribia in mufti (New York City, 1938)

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In publishing these Memoirs, the Institute of Latin-American Studies has been motivated to do so solely because of the fact that they constitute a source of primary importance. It disclaims any other motive.

Editor's Preface

The importance of this publication for the military historian of the Chaco War (1932–1935), in which Paraguay and Bolivia were involved, can hardly be overrated. Marshal Estigarribia held in that armed conflict—one of the most sanguinary ever fought by two South-American republics—the unique position of being the top planner (perhaps the only one) and the commander in chief of the Paraguayan army in the field during the entire course of the campaign. The remarkable success of his leadership is a well-known fact. He emerged from the Chaco War as one of the outstanding masters of strategy in South-American history.

These memoirs, which he intended to publish under the title of *The Epic of the Chaco,* were written in Washington, D.C., where he discharged his duties as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of Paraguay between 1938 and 1939. The Editor was the counsellor of the Paraguayan legation in the same period and had the privilege of collaborating in drafting these recollections as they are set down in the present volume. The drafting was made simultaneously in Spanish and English, and, for the latter language, the intervention of the late Charles H. Moore, the English assistant of the legation, is especially recognized. This publication, therefore, is not, properly speaking, a rendering of any pre-existent Spanish original, for the English manuscript took shape at the same time as the Spanish version from the direct dictation and under the immediate supervision of Marshal Estigarribia himself, who by then possessed a fair knowledge of the English language. The two versions, of course, were checked carefully with each other, but neither had any precedence over its counterpart. This statement, however, does not cover the many documents transcribed throughout the text of the narrative since they were originally written in Spanish and translated into English for the present version.

In formulating these memoirs, Marshal Estigarribia relied on the records of his General Headquarters in the Chaco, of which records he had been presented by his clerical aides with a complete replica of the contents of all the files at the termination of the war, including a bulky set of maps (showing, day by day, the position of the armies), the official correspondence with the government in Asunción, and the reports of the army commanders at the front.[1] But, above all, he drew substantially from the two invaluable sources of his war diary and his own lucid memory. By the extensive use he made of both, *The Epic of the Chaco* is bound to be of exceptional interest for the military historian since he will find in them the inner motive power of the actions of this leader, the real psychological key to his decisions, and his personal style in approaching every problem that confronted him.

Only two typewritten copies were made of each version. One bilingual set was kept by the Marshal, and the other by this Editor. Shortly after the first draft was completed, Marshal Estigarribia went back home on account of his having been nominated presidential candidate in 1939, and there was no time to make a joint rereading of the manuscript with a view to polishing some passages for the sake of precision, fluency, or clarity. He indicated, however, that this Editor should undertake the revision task alone in order to suggest in due course any possible changes. Accordingly, the Editor went over the entire manuscript again and introduced in the context of both of the Spanish and the English versions some slight modifications, of a purely formal character. But, unfortunately, when the Editor returned to Paraguay, Marshal Estigarribia was so overcrowded with work that until his death no favorable moment was found to compare notes with him. The maps in this volume numbered 1 to 7 were roughly sketched by Marshal Estigarribia himself and then drawn in their present form by Mrs. Carmen G. de Ynsfran, under the guidance of the Marshal.

In the Editor's opinion, *The Epic of the Chaco* requires only a minimum of explanatory notes. Some of these were contributed by Marshal Estigarribia at the time that the manuscript was prepared. All such notes contributed by the Marshal have been initialed. In addition, the Editor has seen fit to contribute, in the interest of clarity, some additional notes. None of the notes contributed by the Editor has been initialed.

PABLO MAX YNSFRAN

The University of Texas
February, 1949

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[1] In February, 1936, while Marshal Estigarribia was imprisoned on account of the political events outlined in the following *Editor's Biographical Sketch*, a mob of assailants stormed his house and tried to get hold of those valuable records. The determination and cold-blooded foresight of the Marshal's young daughter, Graciela, saved them from destruction. She managed to hide the papers under a heap of old rugs in the basement, and in this manner the robbers were deceived.

(Editor's collection)

Marshall Estigarribia in the uniform of General of the Army (Washington, D. C., 1939).

EDITOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MARSHAL ESTIGARRIBIA

José Félix Estigarribia[1] was born in the town of Caraguatay, Paraguay, on February 21, 1888. Both of his parents were of Basque extraction, Don Mateo Estigarribia and Doña Casilda Insaurralde. Thus, this family belonged to the sturdy stock of the Vascons—a hard-working, tenacious lot, silent, profoundly religious, but not exactly brilliant—in contraposition to the real Spaniards, the gentlemanly Castilian or the light-hearted and gay Andalusian. The Estigarribias as well as the Insaurraldes had attained some distinction in the early history of independent Paraguay.

Don Mateo, the father of the future Marshal, was a combination of farmer and village silversmith. A tall man—no shorter than six feet—blond, grey-eyed,[2] he became blind in the prime of his life on account of a head wound sustained during the war of the Triple Alliance. He died in 1909 surrounded by the affection and respect of family and friends. Doña Casilda is still alive. Strongly built, the mettle of her personality, in spite of her ninety years of age, seems to be kept intact. Her thoughts are clear and the expression of her piercing, dark-blue eyes reveals alertness of mind. She lives with one of her sons, José Domingo, on a farm of the latter in Northern Paraguay, on the banks of the Aquidabán River.

Don Mateo and Doña Casilda had four sons. José Félix was the third. They moved to the village of Capiatá, a few miles from Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, when their children were in their early teens. While they were in Capiatá, the first School of Agriculture was inaugurated in the country under the direction of the Swiss naturalist, Dr. Moisés S. Bertoni, and Don Mateo expressed his desire that young José Félix attend the new institution. José Félix complied, and in 1903 enrolled in the school, where three years later he obtained his diploma as "agronomist." He proved to be an excellent student and made the highest marks.

After finishing his agricultural training, José Félix did not display, however, much interest in his profession and decided rather to improve his academic standing by entering the *Colegio Nacional* to get the degree of *bachiller,* which is the prerequisite in the Latin-American scholastic system for admission to the professional colleges. Since he was very poor (he had been able to attend the School of Agriculture only through a scholarship), he worked as a court clerk to earn a living.

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[1] The best biography to date is *Estigarribia, el Soldado del Chaco,* by Justo Pastor Benítez, Editorial Difusam, Buenos Aires, 1943, 232 pages.

[2] Benítez describes Don Mateo erroneously as a somewhat short man with a good deal of Guaraní Indian blood in his veins. In fact, the physical appearance of Don Mateo was entirely European.

One morning in July, 1908, when he was going to work from Trinidad, a suburb of Asunción where he lived, José Félix noticed that something abnormal was going on in the city. As he entered the city proper, he learned that a revolution—the favorite and disastrous game of Spanish-American politics—was in full swing. Without much hesitation, he joined the revolutionary forces, which eventually became victorious. José Félix had found his vocation, almost by chance. He liked the army and in 1910 applied for a permanent position. He was commissioned as a temporary second lieutenant of infantry, and thus started his military career.

In the army the young Lieutenant studied hard and grasped the essentials of his new profession with the insight of a mind naturally gifted for the military art. His retiring temperament did not help him much, but his efficiency and earnestness were amply recognized. In February, 1911, another revolution broke out, and the next month he saw action in the clash of Bonete, a bitter and decisive struggle where the revolutionists were smashed. He was badly wounded in the left arm which remained partly paralysed thenceforth.

Once recovered from his wound, Lieutenant Estigarribia was sent for further training to Chile, whose army enjoyed then the prestige of being the best in Spanish America. He studied in Chile two years and returned to Paraguay in 1913. In 1914 he was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant; he reached the rank of captain in 1917.

While stationed in the garrison of Concepción, in 1916 Estigarribia married Julia Miranda Cueto, a young girl of the best traditional families in the country. She proved to be an ideal companion for the young soldier, by her total devotion to him, her quiet charm, and the matron-like atmosphere with which she surrounded her home. The only child of that marriage, Graciela, later became the indispensable collaborator and secretary of her father, who adored her. Graciela has the outer vivacity that was lacking in both her parents, together with the beauty of her mother and the bright mind of her father. She married Dr. Horacio A. Fernández.

(Editor's collection)

Da. Casilda (center, seated), Marshal Estigarribia's aged mother, with her other son, José Domingo, and his wife (1940). They live on a farm in Paso Barreto, northern Paraguay.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

President Ayala of Paraguay (center, with derby hat) and Marshal Estigarribia (in uniform) during the Victory Parade in Asunción at the termination of the Chaco War. To the left of the President clapping their hands, are the Marshal's wife and his daughter Graciela.

During a new civil war in 1922 Captain Estigarribia definitely confirmed his exceptional talent as a military leader by conceiving and personally executing a daring maneuver which resulted in the victorious end for the government of a protracted insurrection. Promoted to the rank of major, he went to Europe two years later, as he explains with some details in the "Preliminary Reminiscenses" of *The Epic of the Chaco.*

Seven months after the termination of the Chaco War in February, 1936, and while General Estigarribia was inspecting the military posts established in the recently reconquered territory, the army stationed in Asunción revolted against and overthrew the administration of President Eusebio Ayala. The General urgently was recalled to the capital by the revolutionists and thrown into prison. After six months in jail—for no reason other than his renown as the indisputable hero of the Chaco War—he went into exile. At the invitation of the Uruguayan government, he taught military strategy for one semester in the Superior School of War of that country. Later he made a tour through Brazil as the official guest of the Brazilian government. He returned to Uruguay where he stayed until—through another revolution, needless to say—a new government was inaugurated in Paraguay which permitted him to return home in February, 1938. On his arrival in Asunción, he was greeted by a tremendous popular demonstration. Shortly afterwards he was appointed to head the Paraguayan legation in Washington, D.C., which he accepted, and came to the United States.

On account of the unsettled political condition in Paraguay, General Estigarribia made two trips home during his tenure in Washington, and in the first of them he intervened decisively in the long negotiations which were then conducted in Buenos Aires under the sponsorship of some neutral American nations in order to work out a treaty of peace between Paraguay and Bolivia, since the fire in the Chaco had ceased through an armistice only. Using his personal influence lavishly and his undeniable diplomatic skill, he managed to overcome all the impasses, and, in that manner, the treaty sought for between the two countries was finally signed on July 21, 1938, putting an end to the century-old dispute over the Chaco.[3]

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[3] Consult *Chaco Peace Conference: Report of the Delegation of the United States of America to the Peace Conference Held at Buenos Aires July 1, 1935–Jan. 23, 1939.* Pub. 1466, 1940, 199 pages, with maps. See also the address delivered by the Hon. Spruille Braden at Johns Hopkins University on February 5, 1939.

Anarchy threatened to break loose once more in Paraguay, and, after many attempts at some remedies to prevent it, the only seeming solution was to elect General Estigarribia for the next presidential term. He was extremely reluctant to mix in politics, but in the end was unable to ignore the insistent appeals made to his patriotism. He accepted the nomination and was elected. His inauguration took place on August 15, 1939. But the restlessness of the armed forces as well as of some political factions made it impossible for him to govern through constitutional restrictions. Thereupon he assumed full powers on February 18, 1940, with the promise of making presently a constitutional revision to revert to normality. That he did with the Constitution of July 10, 1940—approved by a plebiscite on August 4 of the same year. Under his prudent leadership, a revival of hope appeared little by little to spread over the country, when suddenly a stroke of fate again hit Paraguay most cruelly. On the morning of September 7, 1940, while President Estigarribia and his wife were flying to a summer resort, the propeller of the plane broke in midair and the machine plummeted to the ground killing the president, Doña Julia, and the pilot. He was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal posthumously the same day of this tragic end.

Physically, Marshal Estigarribia was a man of midstature, stocky, with white complexion, brown eyes, and dark, slightly curled hair. He was very sensitive to the possibility of being fat, and although he could, and did, enjoy good and generous eating, he had to impose a strict discipline upon himself in order to prevent being led too far by his appetite. He even devised unusual deterrents for this inclination to obesity. For instance, he used to read for hours standing up. During the Chaco campaign, he would have only one meal a day, about noon. At breakfast, he helped himself to a cup of maté—a native tea of the Plata region—and nothing more. For supper he limited his menu to one glass of milk and some cookies. In the same period, after his midday meal and before starting his afternoon work, he would walk for miles, in winter as well as in summer, to the exasperation of his aides. His dislike for the siesta—a deep-rooted habit in Spanish America—was paramount. Also during the Chaco war he would go to bed invariably at ten o'clock, with severe orders not to be disturbed under any circumstances. He was up at seven o'clock every morning. He was not a teetotaler, but made a point not to drink during the war, and never drank a glass of any wine or liquor. Normally an inveterate smoker, during the war he smoked one cigarette daily and no more.

(Editor's collection)

Marshal Estigarribia (center) and Pablo Max Ynsfran (left) during a visit paid to Dr. Leo S. Rowe (right), Director General of the Pan American Union (Washington, D. C., 1939).

Marshal Estigarribia possessed an imperturably well-balanced mind and reasoned along the lines of clear, simple, but forcible logic. He never let any harsh impulses take hold of his thoughts or influence his actions. The most impressive trait of his personality was his alert lucidity and cold command over his nerves. His authority over his subordinates derived from his quiet and natural self-reliance, together, of course, with his considerable technical knowledge and ability. Soft-spoken and amiable, he would not raise his voice or make any impatient retort, although he knew how to fling back a sharp remark, if necessary. In his demeanor he was the opposite of the traditional bursting, saber-rattling, military swashbuckler. He never tried to strike any martial chord "for the show."

His psychological penetration was probably the real secret of Marshal Estigarribia's most resounding military successes. In the final analysis, strategy consisted for him of letting the enemy fall in the pitfalls of his own temperament, by inducing him to make full use of his bad, or worst, judgment. Therefore, he would endeavor first to know "the soul" of his enemy, and, for accomplishing that aim, he was endowed with an uncommon insight and quick comprehension. Once he was sure of the type of foe he was dealing with, he would prime his weapons meticulously, and, at the opportune moment, would strike at the weak point with relentless obstinacy. He would not hesitate then to gamble everything in one stroke. He did that masterfully with his opponent in the Bolivian camp, General Hans Kundt, in the battle of Zenteno. General Kundt would not cede an inch of the terrain for sheer pride. Since Estigarribia knew that Kundt would not move, he began a wide encirclement noticeable for everyone except the haughty German leader. When Kundt understood what was happening, it was too late, and he lost two-thirds of his army.

Marshal Estigarribia was a well-cultured man. He spoke French with perfect fluency. He was a consistent student of history, and was particularly fond of the biographical crop of books of the post-World War I era. In Washington he endeavored strenuously to learn English as quickly as possible to study American history and institutions.

Marshal Estigarribia was not deprived of a sound and jovial sense of humor. Some of his witticisms were of genuine vintage. Once he agreed to write the preface of a book. But the writer of the book insisted, "I may rest assured, then, that you will read the manuscript and write the preface." Estigarribia replied, "Oh, no! After demanding of me the sacrifice of writing the preface, I hope you will be considerate enough to spare me the additional burden of reading the manuscript!" One officer was dismissed from some position because of his proclivity to hard drinking. Someone did not know the reason of the dismissal, and asked Marshal Estigarribia why. The latter explained, "He is an agitator." "This is very surprising to me," said the inquirer, "I never would have imagined that he is an agitator." "Yes," added Estigarribia, "he agitates the cocktail shaker too often."

Marshal Estigarribia's admiration for the United States was deep and sincere. In international matters he was resolved to collaborate most closely with the United States, even if such might awaken some resentment on the part of Argentina, which, when he was inaugurated as president, was not friendly to that country. At the time of the fall of France and the seemingly imminent collapse of Great Britain in 1940, Marshal Estigarribia, alarmed by the possibility that the Germans might break the British blockade and land on South-American soil unchecked, suggested to President Roosevelt that air bases be built in Paraguay for the defense of that continent. That was probably the first offer made spontaneously to the United States by any South-American republic for immediate and unreserved collaboration during the past conflagration. President Roosevelt dispatched without delay a military commission to Asunción to talk over that matter with the Paraguayan president. Unhappily, while that commission was on its way to Paraguay, Marshal Estigarribia was killed in the accident of September 7th, and the American commissioners reached Asunción only to attend his funeral.

(Editor's collection)

American Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Marshal Estigarribia (both seated) signing a financial agreement between the United States and Paraguay (Washington, D. C., June, 1939).

Author's Preface

With the publication of these memoirs, I do not intend to offer a military history of the Chaco War, but rather to organize my personal recollections of the campaign in a comprehensive whole, in the hope that they may shed some light on various aspects thereof.

Neither do I purport to give a purely professional account. Since my real goal is to emphasize the titanic effort of the Paraguayan people in the defense of their honor and their homeland, I do not think that a technical description alone of the campaign will attain that goal. The greatness of the defense of the Chaco is more human than military. It cannot be compressed within the strict limitations of a professional specialty.

The experiences herein narrated are either personal or properly documented, with very few exceptions—one of these being the Bolivian plan for the invasion of the Chaco attributed to General Kundt. I cannot certify that it was exactly as outlined in Chapter I, but I based my sketch on some trustworthy information, gleaned by our intelligence service, which later seemed to be unmistakably confirmed by the behavior of the Bolivian army at the outset of the operations in the field.

In the chronological succession of events, some minute details more than once may strike the reader as unnecessary. By not sparing them, however, I wanted to introduce in the picture all the factors, no matter how apparently insignificant, which, in my opinion, have come to influence a given episode, and all the incidents that have handicapped the realization of a plan. Without those details some developments probably may impress the reader as obscure. On the other hand, I wanted to show the complexity of activities that the Commander in Chief had to attend to in order to keep the whole situation under control.

Unfortunately, for lack of time, I have not surveyed in a special chapter the invaluable services rendered by the different branches of the Paraguayan army in the course of the campaign, each within its own sphere. Eventually, I will pay them this tribute. They will always deserve the national gratitude because, in spite of so many material limitations, they made possible the epic of the Chaco.

JOSÉ FÉLIX ESTIGARRIBIA

Washington, D.C.
February 4, 1939

Preliminary Reminiscences

The Chaco problem sprang from the lack of precision in the jurisdictional deliminations of the different administrative divisions of the Spanish colonial Empire in America. When Paraguay secured her independence from Spain in 1811, and Bolivia in 1825, there was no Chaco problem between the two new republics. Paraguay was born to her independent life as a member of the geographical community tributary to the Río de la Plata, that is to say, as a part of the Atlantic system of southern South America. Bolivia, on the other hand, was constituted as a country belonging to the Andes, and, in consequence, tributary to the Pacific Ocean. The Chaco[1] is bounded entirely on the east by the Paraguay River, and because of this fact it falls completely within the Atlantic system. Asunción, the capital of Paraguay during the colonial period, and afterwards, capital of the republic of the same name, is located facing the Chaco with the Paraguay River in between.

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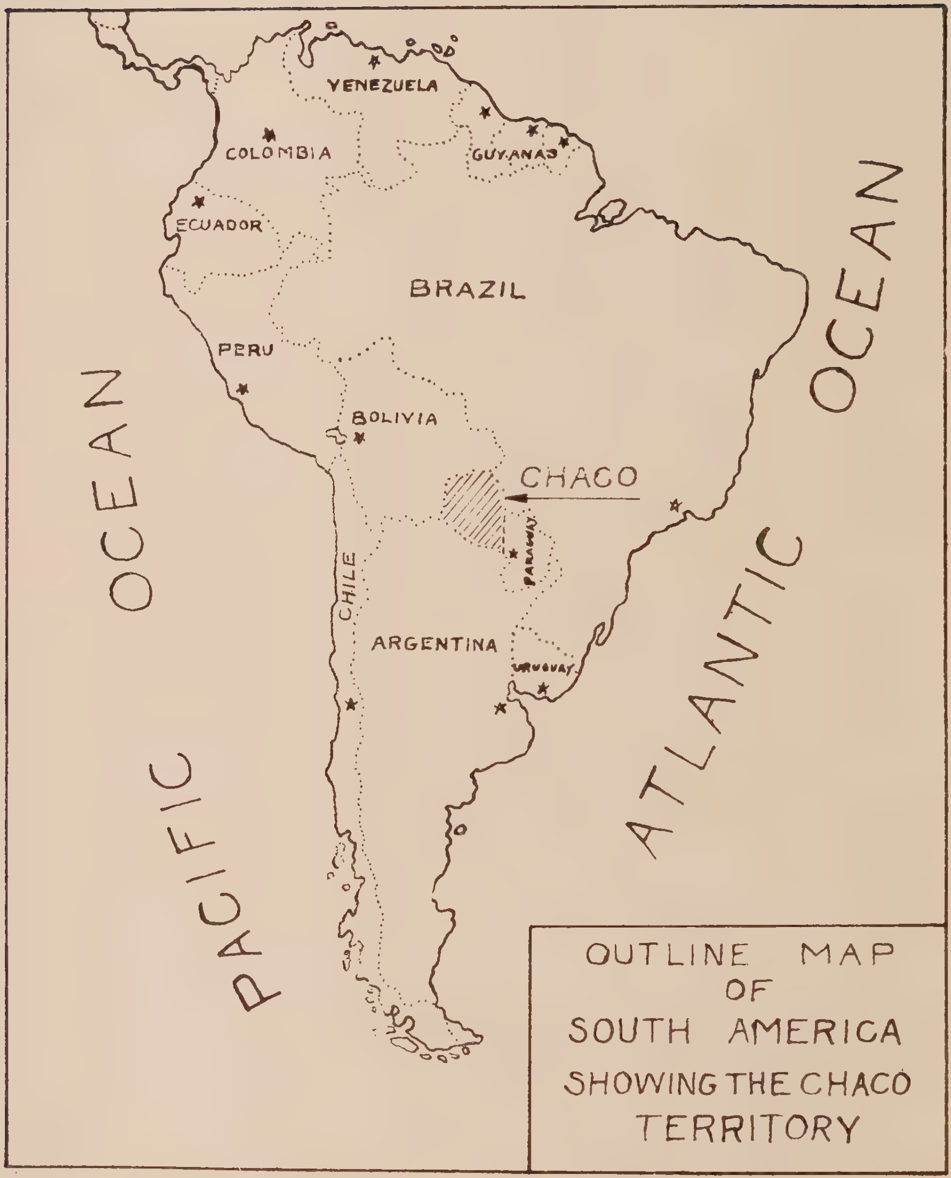
[1] There are three Chacos: Northern, Central and Southern. The present work refers only to the Northern Chaco, commonly known in Spanish as *Chaco Boreal.* J.F.E.

Broadly speaking, the region called Chaco, or Grand Chaco, in the Río de la Plata Valley, stretches from the northern part of the Argentine province of Santa Fe to southeastern Bolivia, between parallels 29° and 19°, alongside the western banks of the Paraná and Paraguay rivers. It is divided into three subregions, *viz.*, Southern Chaco, encompassed by the province of Santa Fe and the Bermejo River; Central Chaco (the Territory of Formosa, in Argentina) lying between the Bermejo and the Pilcomayo rivers; and Northern Chaco (the battlefield of the Chaco War), limited by the Pilcomayo River and Bahía Negra, where the Negro, or Otuquis, River joins its waters with the Paraguay River.

Before the War of the Triple Alliance (1865–1870) waged by Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay against Paraguay, the ownership of Central and Northern Chaco was in dispute between Argentina and Paraguay. By the treaty of May 1, 1865, the three allies, in anticipation of their victory over Paraguay, assigned to Argentina the property of the entire territory in dispute. But when the war ended with the utter defeat of Paraguay, as expected by the allies, Brazil failed to back up Argentina to make good her claim and, rather, induced Paraguay to resist the Argentine demand.

A diplomatic negotiation ensued which ended when the treaty of February 3, 1876, was signed by Argentina and Paraguay, acknowledging Argentine ownership over Central Chaco and dividing Northern Chaco into two portions, *viz.*, one in the north, recognized as Paraguayan territory, and another in the south, the ultimate fate of which was to be arbitrated by the President of the United States. On November 12, 1878, President Rutherford B. Hayes awarded that portion also to Paraguay, and it came to be known as "the Hayes zone" during the controversy between Bolivia and Paraguay.



C.P. Kagans - University of Texas

It was obvious that under such circumstances Asunción should exercise immediate jurisdiction over the Chaco. The administrative centers of Upper Perú (such was the name of Bolivia in the colonial period) were separated from the Chaco proper by gigantic mountains and vast deserts stretching over hundreds of miles. Therefore they could not—even from a physical point of view, if I may say so—exercise any influence over the Chaco, and actually they never did. So, when independence arrived there was not any question about the Paraguayan jurisdiction over the Chaco—a natural fact recognized for centuries, except by the Argentine republic, for reasons which are not here pertinent. Independent Paraguay accordingly occupied the Chaco, in the habitable sections, without any objection, because Paraguay and the Chaco practically form one indissoluble geographic unit.

But there still remained the precise definition of the boundaries in the hinterland of the Chaco, which was very little explored and little known during the Spanish dominion. This hinterland extends as far as the Republic of Bolivia. The problem was thus reduced to a delimitation of the line of separation between the two republics. And upon these terms the first negotiations were conducted for a definite settlement of the common frontiers between Paraguay and Bolivia.

In 1879 an event occurred which was bound to give a different turn to the question. In the so-called War of the Pacific Chile wrested from Bolivia all the sea coast that she possessed on the Pacific Ocean. As a result of this mishap Bolivia found herself landlocked, or, better to say, at the mercy of Chile. True enough, by the Treaty of 1904, between Chile and Bolivia, the latter obtained free access to the Pacific through her former coastal territory, now under the political jurisdiction of Chile, but she did not resign herself to the loss of a seaboard of her own. Unable to reconquer by force the land of which she had been deprived, Bolivia then sought out a compensation somewhere else, and set her eyes on the banks of the Paraguay River. She believed that in this direction she would encounter no insuperable difficulty. Paraguay was a weak country, her population and her wealth ruined by the disastrous war of 1865–70, and had no political stability. To despoil Paraguay of her Chaco would be a relatively easy task—all would depend upon a good plan of penetration in that wilderness, systematically and persistently executed. The Paraguayans, distracted by their civil wars, would perceive no real danger until the Bolivians were well established upon the Paraguay River, in fact, until they were confronted by a *fait accompli.* And then it would be too late. Paraguay, a country considerably inferior to Bolivia in population and wealth, would have to bow in submission as Bolivia had bowed under Chilean compulsion.

In this manner a problem of delimitation of frontiers became a military challenge for the possession of half the Paraguayan territory. That change could not be overlooked in Paraguay, but, unfortunately, the political discords which shook our country during prolonged periods prevented the contemplation of the situation in the light of the real intentions of Bolivia. Although the efforts of Bolivia were emphasized more and more toward the military occupation of the Chaco, the belief persisted in Paraguay that the dispute might be postponed indefinitely, as in the past, without the menace that it would at any time degenerate into an armed conflict. Up to the last moment hopes were entertained that Bolivia would accept some juridical solution—but this was the last thing Bolivia had any intention of doing because of the noticeable weakness of her case.

Our greatest danger, then, was this veritable incomprehension of the international situation on the part of the ruling class in Paraguay. When the country suddenly awoke to the reality it was realized that everything was to be done hurriedly, in the face of an adversary who had gained the advantage of more than thirty years' preparation. Under such conditions the defense of the Chaco by Paraguay offered innumerable difficulties, not only because of the lack of military preparation but because of the lack of co-ordination in the general organization of the defense. There was further an extraordinary contingency, that of the necessity to fight the war in a jungle with whose peculiarities the Paraguayans were not familiar.

Generally the Chaco is represented as a marshy wasteland. In truth, it is a vast waterless plain with almost imperceptible undulations and slight slope from west to east—a plain covered mostly by bushes of hardwoods and many species of cactus, some of them creeping, which in certain regions blanket the ground as if with a thorny carpet. By the Paraguay and Pilcomayo rivers the Chaco is periodically inundated with the overflow of those rivers, and then the waters spread over scores of kilometers inland, but seldom go more than one hundred kilometers. The soil is clayish, impermeable and hard for the work of man. Therefore during the heavy rainfalls of the summer season the waters run unchecked over widely expanded areas which makes transportation difficult. After the rainy season the waters are evaporated by the sun, and the territory becomes totally dry for the rest of the year. Also, because of the lack of water, the fauna of the interior of the Chaco is relatively poor.

As the Chaco is rich in quebracho, a wood from which tannin is extracted for the curing of leather, factories are established for the exploitation of this wood. Narrow-gauged railroads of various lengths were constructed to carry the logs to the mills on the river front. These railroads serve also to transport water from the river to the settlements of the interior.

These characteristics of the Chaco gave to Paraguay a certain immunity from an attack from the Bolivian side. Hence the Bolivian penetration into the territory, in its initial stage, had to be along the Pilcomayo River, so as to remain near the existing water. But later, with the appearance of the means of automotive transport, the Chaco was rendered vulnerable on all sides, and accordingly the Bolivian invasion was widened and the claims of Bolivia increased, to the extent that she worked out a plan of far-flung invasion and became more and more emboldened. Originally demanding a tract of land upon the Paraguay River, Bolivia now wanted the whole Chaco, virtually without any limitation.

Our country was confronted by this vital problem, of whose essential aspects, from a military point of view, I thought I had some clear perception, when there was offered to me towards the end of 1924 the opportunity to go to Europe to study. Realizing that the weakest point of our army existed in the superior command, I accepted this mission with the purpose of studying the lessons gathered by the Europeans in the World War, and I went to France.

On reaching my destination in the year cited, I learned that the path to be taken in order to accomplish my purpose lay through the École Superieure de Guerre in which institution I was admitted. As a previous preparation for studies in the École itself, I was attached for a period of six months to regiments of different arms which covered the German frontier. Afterward I returned to Paris in order to attend the lectures of the École, in November, 1925. I must confess, in passing, that I was compelled painfully to exert myself in order to attain the superior position held by my comrades, because our secondary preparation in Paraguay has many lapses which make our passage through European or North-American institutes of learning particularly strenuous.

In August, 1927, I received my brevet as an Officer of the French General Staff, after completing the courses of that year. I returned immediately to Paraguay, arriving on September 22nd, which was the anniversary of our victory of Curupayty against the forces of the Triple Alliance in 1866.

The first information which I received on my return to Paraguay demonstrated that the situation in the Chaco had been considerably aggravated by reason of the constant advances made by the Bolivians in their penetration. Chains of small Bolivian military posts, improperly called *fortines*,[2] stretched to the Paraguay River. The news from all sources coincided in indicating the great preparations that Bolivia was making in the military field, which showed that the war would break out in a short time unless Paraguay accepted the passive surrender of the entire Chaco. (See Outline Map of the Chaco.)

A few days after my return I was appointed Assistant Chief of the General Staff, in which post I could verify directly the almost complete absence of all kinds of preparation for the defense of the Chaco in the presence of an enemy in full activity. After occupying my new post for a period of two weeks, I undertook my first long journey of inspection across the Chaco; and afterwards I made four more journeys, crossing the vast territory from one extreme to the other and suffering great hardships. Some months later, in the first part of 1928, I was appointed Chief of the General Staff, replacing my predecessor, who had resigned. In the course of the journeys of inspection previously mentioned I had the opportunity to order the establishment of some *fortines* in such places where the Bolivian menace had become most dangerous and also the emplacements of some telegraph lines and the opening of some roads which were indispensable for the service of the posts then established.

The most valuable experience reaped from these journeys was the knowledge of the terrain, which would enable me in the near future to outline the defense of our territory. Nevertheless, the conclusions which I had drawn from my surveys on the terrain did not harmonize with the dominant ideas then held by the most influential chiefs of the Paraguayan army. In fact I was constrained to keep silent upon those conclusions until the course of events offered me the occasion of applying them personally.

This disagreement in the approach to the defense of the Chaco brought upon me disgrace before my superiors. I was deprived of my charge of Chief of Staff at the time of the Vanguardia incident, which took place in December, 1928,[3] when I was making one of my journeys to the interior of the Chaco. Without the consideration usual in these cases the General Commander in Chief appointed me unexpectedly as commander of one of the sectors of the Chaco and ordered me to report at Concepción, where my post of command was established. In my place Lt. Col. Joseph Coulet was appointed chief of the General Staff. Lt. Col. Coulet was the chief of the French military mission which at that time directed the Superior School of War in Asunción. He, with a noble gesture of solidarity, accepted the position of chief of the General Staff despite the fact that he had resided only a few months in the country and did not know the terrain, the possible theater of operations, and still less the qualities of our people, who were flocking in mass to the quarters to take arms. It was natural that Lt. Col. Coulet would adhere to the ideas of his chiefs.

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[2] Fortín (plural, *fortines*), a Spanish word used throughout the text, means literally small fort, but in truth a *fortín* hardly meets the specifications of a real military establishment. Usually it is a group of makeshift huts for the lodging of a few troops, surrounded by trenches, if any at all. Some *fortines* have grown into small villages, but those, especially before the Chaco War, were the exception.

Bolivia and Paraguay multiplied their *fortines* in the Chaco in order to assert some sort of pre-emption right, or as tokens of actual possession.

The moment had arrived, in the opinion of the military chiefs of that time, to put in practice the said ideas, so different from mine, a circumstance that probably rendered unnecessary my intervention in the Superior Command, and which explained my sudden exclusion. In the chapter that follows I shall examine in detail our respective contentions.

The Vanguardia crisis passed, incidentally demonstrating the appalling disorganization in which Paraguay found herself from a military point of view to cope with a serious emergency in the

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[3] The Paraguayans on December 5, 1928, captured and destroyed the Bolivian Fortín Vanguardia, located some fifteen kilometers to the northwest of the Paraguayan Fortín Galpón, in the Bahía Negra region (see Outline Map of the Chaco). The Bolivians retaliated by capturing the Paraguayan *fortines* Boquerón and Mariscal López, located toward the center of the Chaco. Those actions resulted in a very tense international situation. Through the instrumentality, however, of the International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration, then sitting in Washington, D.C., war was avoided by causing Bolivia and Paraguay to sign the protocol of January 3, 1929, which referred their mutual grievances to a Commission of Inquiry and Conciliation composed of representatives of Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, the United States, and Uruguay.

That Commission, on September 12, 1929, succeeded in patching up the strained relations of the two antagonists, at least temporarily. The captured *fortines* were restored to their previous status.

Between the incidents in the *fortines* and the signing of the Washington protocol, both Bolivia and Paraguay made hasty preparations for the eventuality of war. Marshal Estigarribia alludes above to the awkward way in which Paraguay mobilized its armed forces during that crisis.

Chaco. After the demobilization of the army, one of the most influential chiefs of the Paraguayan army returned from Europe to take charge of the portfolio of War and Navy.[4] A little time after assuming his charge the Minister ordered me to give up my command of Concepción and to report to Asunción for orders. When in Asunción, the Minister requested me to return to the position of chief of the General Staff. I was rather reluctant to accept this return, but he insisted in such a manner that finally I yielded with the hope of carrying further my ideas upon the military defense of the Chaco.

Unfortunately the lack of comprehension of the problem was then denser than ever. The few works which during my first period of office on the General Staff had been constructed in the territory in danger had been utterly neglected. There were even acts of mutiny among some troops of the Chaco garrisons on account of the complete inattention in which the central authorities left them.

Of course I tried immediately to renew my work of organization in the Chaco in accord with the ideas which I always held, and this insistence did not take long to bring upon me the ill will of the powerful Minister, who belonged to the school of those chiefs who had received with such disfavor my first suggestions upon the method of approaching the defense of the Chaco. Consequently, towards the end of 1930, under some pretext, and without much ceremony, I found myself again separated from my position as Chief of Staff.

At the beginning of 1931, the President of the Republic changed his Minister of War and Navy, and a civilian took the portfolio,[5] who, a little afterwards, appointed me Inspector General of the Army, a charge that I accepted in view of the good disposition of the new Minister towards taking care of the preparation of the defense of the Chaco. But as the functions of the Inspector General were merely bureaucratic, without sufficient authority for any vigorous action such as the circumstances demanded, I offered to go to the Chaco to organize a division of the army, which would be the first one to be organized in our country. At the end of June, 1931, I arrived at Puerto Casado, the place selected for the post of command of the division, to renew my work.

In my new journeys to the interior of the territory I witnessed the pitiful negligence in which everything had been left since 1928.

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[4] General Manlio Schenoni L.

[5] Dr. Raúl Casal Ribeiro.

The telegraph lines lay upon the ground. The Bolivian penetration had made enormous progress. With the abandonment by Paraguay, the Bolivians had occupied some of the posts set up under my direction. Such, for example, was the old Paraguayan post of Samaklay[6] where the clash of that year occurred, because of a reconnaissance that I ordered to reoccupy the place.[7]

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[6] The original Indian name of the place was *Masamaklay;* but current use suppressed the first syllable. The Bolivians, after taking the Paraguayan post established there, gave to it the Spanish name of Agua Rica (Pleasant Water).—J.F.E.

[7] Fortín Samaklay, founded by the Paraguayans, fell into the hands of the Bolivians, who repulsed an attempt at recapturing it made by the Paraguayans in September, 1931.

Part One

THE INITIAL OFFENSIVE

CHAPTER I

(A) The Military Preparation of Paraguay and Bolivia in 1932

The respective military preparations of Paraguay and Bolivia to the middle of the year 1932, when the Chaco War broke out, offered an impressive contrast. While on the part of Paraguay, as has been made clear in the preliminary reminiscences, nothing had been done which could be considered as an earnest effort, Bolivia had a harvest of thirty years of persistent and systematic preparation.

The military data which are set forth below in parallel columns may not be strictly exact with regard to Bolivia, since that country, with many years of anticipation, had kept secret her war budget. Yet they are fairly reliable; they were gathered by our intelligence department, and subsequent facts have attested their substantial accuracy. The information referring to Paraguay, on the other hand, is taken from official statistics.

We must begin with the statement that Bolivia has about 3,500,000 inhabitants, while the population of Paraguay does not reach 1,000,000 souls.

The expenditures indicated by the national budget of Bolivia were 12,000,000 American dollars; and those of Paraguay not more than 4,000,000 of the same currency.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF THE MILITARY PREPARATION OF PARAGUAY AND BOLIVIA IN THE MIDDLE OF 1932

Bolivia	Paraguay
Military Institutions. A General Staff well organized and well supplied; a Superior School of War for the preparation of officers of the General Staff; various Schools of Application of Arms; a Military Academy for the training of officers; a School of Military Aviation well equipped; Arsenals of War perfectly equipped; and a School for noncommissioned officers.	*Military Institutions.* A General Staff functioning precariously and with a scarcity of equipment and officers; a Superior School of War under the direction of an Argentine Military Mission which had entered the second year of its functions; a Military School of cadets; a School of Aviation; and a School for noncommissioned officers recently established.

Effectives. Six divisions of infantry with 2,000 men in each one; 2,000 chiefs and officers, among them 19 generals in active service; 1,000 chiefs and officers of the services; an abundant reserve of chiefs and officers of all ranks; and, since the country was little less than totally militarized, Bolivia could rely upon an instructed reserve of at least 10,000 noncommissioned officers and 300,000 men.	*Effectives.* One division of infantry (in formation). The units, insufficiently organized, were: 4 regiments of infantry, 1 regiment of cavalry, 1 group of artillery, and 1 company of engineers. The effectives were: 355 chiefs and officers, among them 3 generals; 146 chiefs and officers of the services; 200 cadets; 690 noncommissioned officers; 2,635 soldiers of the five arms. Total: 3,321 troops. Paraguay had no territorial organization. She did not possess any instructed reserve. They had never practiced a single maneuver in the country.
Armaments. 300 modern cannons of various models; 1,500 machine guns; 150,000 Mauser rifles; 80,000 lances; 60 war planes; equipment and diverse elements for 150,000 men. They had in store artillery munitions for 80 batteries, to the extent of 1,000 shots for each one, and a considerable quantity of cartridges for rifles and machine guns. They had on order munitions and equipment for 60,000 men, part of which material had been already received in La Paz.	*Armaments.* 16 cannons of 105 and 75; 24 Stokes-Brandt mortars; 32 heavy and 100 light machine guns; 12,000 rifles, only 5,000 in good condition; 8 war planes; 1,000 artillery shells; and 4,000,000 infantry and machine gun cartridges.
The High Command. The Bolivian High Command was vested in a General Staff composed of professionals of the first order with all the necessary elements.	*The High Command.* In time of peace there existed in Paraguay no High Command. Preparations for defense were badly distributed among the Inspector General, the Ministry of War and Navy, and the General Staff of the Army.

Under these conditions, most unfavorable in every way for Paraguay, the two forces were about to clash. A nation of about 3,500,000 inhabitants, which had at its disposal an army perfectly armed and equipped with the most modern elements, full of confidence in its might and of disdain for its adversary, was ready to throw itself upon a small people of fewer than 1,000,000 souls, unwarned and without any military preparation. But to this organized and arrogant power we intended to oppose the virile tradition of our people and the discipline of our courage. In order to frustrate the physical onslaught we would display our strategical skill. Bolivia relied upon the power of material forces, but Paraguay confided her destiny to the valor of the imponderable forces of her moral fortitude.

(B) The Bolivian Plan of Invasion

According to our intelligence service the Bolivian plan of invasion was elaborated by General Hans Kundt, to whom subsequently I shall refer with greater amplitude, and consisted of a surprising and thunder-striking advance across the Chaco towards the Paraguay River, with a succession of pincer-like movements which would rapidly enclose the weak Paraguayan defenses. For this purpose six columns, each of 10,000 men, were to be constituted, and these columns had to concentrate in the regions of Puerto Suárez, Ingavi-Ravelo, Santa Fe-Charagua, Carandayty-Villa Montes, Ballivián-Platanillos, and Muñoz-Saavedra. (See Map No. 1.)

The said columns were to move, and the mechanism of the pincers was to act, in the following manner: The column from Puerto Suáre was to start towards the south and that from Ravelo in a southeasterly direction in order to pass by Fortín Pando, and these two columns were to close with a pincer-like movement upon Bahía Negra. A third column starting from Ingavi was also to direct itself towards the southeast in the direction of Pitiantuta. A fourth column was to march to Picuiba and Camacho joining with a fifth which would leave Ballivián, and both would close upon Toledo. A sixth was to keep the Paraguayan garrison of Nanawa at bay and to march through Boquerón upon Villa Militar.[8]

Bahía Negra once taken, the two columns from the north, reunited, would descend towards the south along the Paraguay River as far down as the mouth of the Apa River, from whence they would pass to the eastern section of the country. The three columns from the south, after they had taken Toledo and Villa Militar, were to march simultaneously and unite in Pozo Azul, from whence they would continue together in order to close another pincer upon Punta Rieles[9] with the column which would arrive from Ingavi via Pitiantuta.

When these latter movements were accomplished the four united columns were to direct themselves to Puerto Casado in order to close the final pincer movement upon it with the other two columns of the north, which would have made their passage by the Apa River and would have marched southward always along the Paraguay River.

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[8] The original name of this place was *Cacique Ramón*. Later it was named successively *Isla Poí* and *Villa Militar*. The latter name is the one officially used.—J.F.E.

[9] The terminal of the Puerto Casado railroad line (see Map No. 1) is called Punta Rieles. In rather unorthodox Spanish, the expression Punta Rieles purports to mean, literally, the end of a railroad track.

The enemy Command assumed that after this effort the Paraguayan army would be beaten and that, with all the troops reunited, the Bolivian columns could proceed to the south of the country by the Paraguay River in order to occupy the principal cities, namely, Concepción, which they would call Salamanca; then Asunción, and finally Villarrica; the latter city would receive the name of Saavedra. In this manner Paraguay would be deprived of her Chaco and would be submitted to a condition of slavery. She would be declared responsible for the war, burdened with all the cost thereof, and obliged to defray the expenses of the troops of occupation until the debt was totally paid off.

As to Paraguay, she had no plan whatever.

CHAPTER II

From Pitiantuta to Boqueron

Almost in the center of the Chaco there exists a natural dam of pluvial waters which the Indians of the region called Pitiantuta and which the troops at my command had occupied as a post of vigilance. These troops consisted of a corporal and five soldiers. We had baptized this post with the name Carlos Antonio López. On June 15, 1932, at dawn, some 300 men of the Bolivian regular army surrounded this small Paraguayan post, killing the occupants with the exception of two soldiers who at the moment were absent from the *fortín*. On the night of June 18th I received in my P.C.[10] at Puerto Casado the report of one of our fugitive soldiers who had made a journey on foot of nearly 150 kilometers in order to reach a telegraph line.

The Bolivian assault was perpetrated during the time that a commission in Washington, D.C., which had been sitting from November 11th of the previous year, and composed of delegates of Paraguay and Bolivia and the representatives of five mediating countries, was endeavoring to work out a pact of nonaggression between Paraguay and Bolivia.[11] Sight must not be lost of the fact that the initiative for this negotiation had emanated from the Bolivian government and consequently the attack upon Pitiantuta, obviously premeditated, assumed particular gravity.

It was evident that the Bolivians, not restrained by any diplomatic scruple, had decided to secure the possession of a place provided with water in furtherance of their plan, which they thus started to put into practice. I was aware of this fact from the first moment. But, on the other hand, the possession of Pitiantuta by us also played an important part in my operational designs to thwart the enemy—as I shall explain later—so that for a double reason I considered the recovery of Pitiantuta to be indispensable.

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[10] Abbreviation for post of command, used henceforth throughout the text.—J.F.E.

[11] In response to an invitation of the American nations formerly represented in the Commission of Inquiry and Conciliation (*supra*, note 3), the Bolivian government proposed on July 24, 1931, the consideration of a pact of nonaggression between Bolivia and Paraguay. Upon the acceptance of Paraguay, delegates of the two countries met in Washington, D.C., beginning November 11, 1931, under the auspices of the above-mentioned nations. While the negotiations were still under way, the Bolivians captured Fortín Carlos Antonio López (Pitiantuta). As a protest against this action, the Paraguayan government withdrew its delegation from the Washington conference, but later on, at the request of the neutral mediators, the withdrawal was reconsidered. The conference, however, failed to prevent the war.

Thus resolved, I determined to send a detachment of 50 men to reconnoitre which could be followed later by the troops necessary for the retaking of the *fortín.* A few days afterwards the detachment started from Casanillo (a relay post between Punta Rieles and Villa Militar) occupying nearly one week in order to arrive in the proximity of Pitiantuta and to establish contact with the Bolivians, who numbered not fewer than 300 men. As a consequence of this information I dispatched as a reinforcement 300 more men provided with machine guns and two Stokes-Brandt mortars.

Our column, after covering the required distance by narrow paths through desert woods, the men on foot and the equipment on the backs of mules, attacked the Bolivians on July 15th. The employment of the Stokes-Brandt mortars, a new arm for them, gave to the Bolivians the impression that the Paraguayans were attacking in great numbers and were provided with artillery, and the following day they made a disorderly flight, leaving in our possession all their equipment, even to the last ration of food.

With the recapture of Pitiantuta by the Paraguayans, the Bolivian Command, seeing an important action preparatory for the realization of their plan frustrated, reacted violently, and, proclaiming the right of reprisal, took three more of our *fortines,* namely Corrales, on July 26th; Toledo, on the 28th, and Boquerón, on the 31st.

A decisive moment in my career and in my life had arrived. It was war, war which was to put to a test the ideas that I had always maintained to be necessary for the defense of the Chaco. These ideas were at variance with the orthodoxy in vogue among the high chiefs of the Paraguayan army and had cost me so much tribulation in times of peace.

The prevailing confusion and the lack of comprehension were such in the Paraguayan capital that they impaired the possibility of undertaking any adequate organization in those memorable days. One of the measures demanding most urgent adoption was the designation of a single commander in chief who should direct everything, because with the nervousness provoked by the situation everybody was giving orders in the Chaco: the President of the Republic, the Minister of War and Navy, the Chief of the General Staff, and myself. This had reached such an extremity that on July 12th I was compelled to send a telegram to the Minister of War in which I informed him that if he should continue to give direct orders to the units of my command, I was superfluous. On the same day I forwarded also to the Minister the following note:

P.C., July 12, 1932,
To the Minister of War and Navy,
Asunción.

In view of the state of war created by the new Bolivian aggression and the retirement of our delegates from Washington, and the strategic distribution of our troops constituting a danger extremely grave, because to the First Division of Infantry is assigned a sector so extraordinarily extended, from Pitiantuta to Nanawa, which from every point of view is impossible to defend with efficacy, and taking into further account the possibility of another aggression, this time perhaps more important, in a short time, in some other part of this sector of which this division is in charge, I propose to the Ministry the following urgent measures:

1. Transfer immediately the Corrales Regiment of Infantry No. 3 to Puerto Casado with all its equipment, in order to take charge of the region of Pitiantuta.
2. Mobilization of all the units of the First Division of Infantry.
3. Convert the School of Noncommissioned Officers into a regiment of infantry, giving them rapidly all the necessary equipment.
4. Provide all necessary equipment for the existing Regiments of Cavalry.
5. Prepare the mobilization of three more regiments of infantry.
6. Appoint the Commander in Chief of the Army with the legal faculties required, who must direct the operations in conformity with a concrete plan and upon his exclusive responsibility.

It is possible that Bolivia at this time has ordered the mobilization of her army, which operation will occupy three months. Paraguay, on the other hand, can mobilize in less than half of this time and because of the numerical inferiority of the national army, the advantage of getting ahead in mobilization must be intensely exploited.

In order to initiate its operations, the Paraguayan army must not wait for the assembly of the Bolivian columns, which, as we know, will take place in the Puerto Casado sector.

José F. Estigarribia,
Lt. Col., Commander of the First Division.

By a decree of July 23rd the retired Brigadier General Manuel Rojas A. was appointed commander in chief. He was a man who did not enjoy good health, a circumstance which had contributed to his absence from active service, but whose chief shortcoming consisted in his blank ignorance of the terrain over which his troops would move, the reason being, as it was with the chiefs of his rank in the Paraguayan army at that time, that he had never been in the Chaco. From this ignorance of the terrain probably stemmed the theory, so obdurately held by all of them, that we had to organize the defense of the Chaco upon the banks of the Paraguay River, or, in other words, that we had to defend the Chaco after it had been conquered by the enemy.

My disagreement with such glaring incongruity was the cause of the vicissitudes of my career on my return from Europe, to which I have aluded in the preceding pages. The war which had commenced placed me in a dramatic situation, confronted by difficulties that had never faced any commander. A powerful enemy army was moving towards the execution of its plan, and in order to check it I had at my disposal no more than 500 men dispersed over hundreds of kilometers upon the Paraguayan line of occupation. To this must be added the divergence of opinion which separated me from the military authorities in Asunción who probably would not be willing to give me the required support to carry out my designs, the success of which, nevertheless, depended upon rapidity of action.

According to the school to which General Rojas belonged, the only adequate procedure to check the Bolivian avalanche was to organize our defense upon the Paraguay River, because of the dire scarcity of equipment available for the defense, and, above all, because of the lack of preparation by the country for war. This conception began by ignoring the possibilities which the imperfections of the ambitious enemy plan, previously described, offered. Among such imperfections should be mentioned its extremely simple structure, which based everything upon surprise, to the extent that it took but little account of the Paraguayan determination. The plan of defense upon the river certainly acknowledged the reality of our lack of preparation, which could not be overlooked, but it was not supported by some well-founded confidence, and it neglected, in anticipation and in an obvious spirit of defeatism, all the possible fruits of some audacity.

On my part, I relied upon my knowledge of our people, upon what they were capable of doing in these emergencies, and likewise upon the technical principles to whose successful application the presumptuous Bolivian plan amply lent itself; and I held that, far from permitting the enemy to arrive unchecked upon the Paraguay River, thus facilitating his march through the desert, *the defense should go to the encounter at the greatest possible distance from the river, making in this manner the desert our ally in our endeavor to trammel his advance.*

The defense upon the river would compel us to stretch out our troops to the length of more than a thousand five hundred kilometers from Fortín Galpón to the Pilcomayo River, as was attempted in 1928 in connection with the Vanguardia incident; that is to say, we should declare ourselves vanquished on every hand because, while we should find ourselves scattered in weak fractions, the enemy, with all his troops assembled, could act freely upon any point he selected.

The appearance in force of the enemy upon any point on the Paraguay River would imply also the possibility that the Bolivian army could live upon our resources with the loss by us, from the commencement of hostilities, of a vast zone of the country, in which great factories were established and where cattle existed in abundance.

The essential, then, for the Paraguayan defense was precisely the contrary: not to permit the reunion of the enemy columns that in ample deployment would march towards their objective, but to try to break the teeth of each pincer before it closed. *And this could be done only far from the Paraguay River.*

Rapidity of action was imperative. Any further delay might prove fatal; and nobody in Asunción, in the midst of the consternation induced by the crisis, could appreciate this urgency properly. Apparently in Asunción they rested groundless hopes on fragile diplomatic chances and there prevailed a regrettable incertitude with regard to the military measures necessary to be adopted. In the diplomatic field, however, we had nothing more to hope for, since Bolivia had perpetrated her assault on Pitiantuta in execution of a plan clearly of a military character which indicated that nothing would lead her along the road of pacific negotiations. This was even more evident in the tone that she employed in her answers to all the suggestions made by the neutral mediators in Washington. Thus, for example, on August 1st the Bolivian Foreign Minister expressed bluntly by cable to the American Secretary of State, Mr. Henry L. Stimson, that Bolivia was "resolved to liquidate the controversy even by the force of arms"—namely, the dispute concerning the Chaco—and that, consequently, she was not interested in the proposed investigations by the neutral mediators in order to prevent war. After such a manifestation it was no longer possible for anyone to have any illusion regarding the intentions of our enemy. When on August 3rd the same neutrals formulated their famous declaration that they "will not recognize any territorial arrangement in this controversy that had not been obtained by peaceful means," Bolivia answered scornfully that this declaration did not apply to her, and that at any rate she was determined to resort even to "bloody sacrifices" [war] because it was necessary "to break the barrier which prevents access to her banks on the Paraguay River," that is to say, because it was necessary for her to take the Chaco.[12]

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[12] When, as a result of the attacks and counterattacks in Carlos Antonio López (Pitiantuta), Corrales, Toledo, and Boquerón, in June and July, 1932, Bolivia and Paraguay were ominously drifting toward active warfare, the American nations sponsoring the pact of non-aggression already mentioned (*supra,* note 11), in an appeal to the two rivals, proposed the cessation of

This notification was explicit enough for Paraguay to understand that she had no other alternative but to prepare feverishly for her defense. But the military confusion was such in the Command in Asunción that an entire month transpired without a way being found to save the country from the impending débâcle. Yet more, the aberration reached such an extreme that on August 10th, with the enemy swarming from every direction around me, I received an order from the Chief Command which said, "Gradually disband the reserve troops." And on August 12th the same command emphatically stressed to me that "a very favorable international action does not permit the taking of any offensive for the moment." I do not know to what particular action our Command referred, but it is certain that Bolivia did not regard it (as innocently as our Command did) as a brake upon military operations, for on the 15th of the same month she captured our Fortín Carayá.

Let us see how this process towards the shaping of our defense chronologically unfolded. On July 24th, the day following the taking charge of the Chief Command by General Rojas, the first symptoms that this general desired to retreat upon the river manifested themselves. I received from him a dispatch which said:

July 24, 1932.
Cyphered N. 2/47/2.

You shall order the retirement of the Battalion guarding Pitiantuta, leaving an observation post commanded by an officer and under conditions not to be surprised and able to retire in case of being attacked by superior forces, &., &.

Sgd.: General Rojas.

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hostilities, the restoration of the *status quo ante*, and the investigation of the incidents. Bolivia replied on August 1, 1932: "Investigations which do not define the fundamental question [that is, the ultimate fate of the Chaco] do not interest us. Bolivia desires the final solution of the controversy. She does not desire to be perennially on guard in the Chaco checking the advances of Paraguay. It is for that reason that the country has reacted with all its forces, resolved to liquidate the controversy even by force of arms. We are defending a territory which we consider historically ours." That reply, signed by Sr. Julio A. Gutiérrez, was addressed to the American Secretary of State, Mr. Henry L. Stimson.

Thereupon all the neutral American nations together made on August 3rd a declaration to the effect that they "will not recognize any territorial arrangement of this controversy which had not been obtained by peaceful means nor the validity of any territorial acquisitions through occupation or conquest by force of arms."

That declaration elicited the following answer from Bolivia: "We wish to terminate the Chaco question, the country being resolved to make bloody sacrifices in defense of its territory. The nation needs to break the barrier which prevents access to its banks on the Paraguay River in order to have communication with the world. That is one of the bases for a solution which must be required for Paraguay to insure the peace of America."

On July 30th, in consequence of the taking of our *fortines* Corrales and Toledo by the Bolivians, I submitted to the Chief Command the following proposition:

P.C., July 30, 1932,
To the Chief Command,
Asunción.

The new Bolivian aggressions upon our positions of Corrales and Toledo should bring at last to the national government the conviction of the existence of a state of war with Bolivia. There must be thrown into this sector all the available population of the country in order to save the nation, and this must be done peremptorily within twenty days in order that we may vanquish the Bolivian army.

If this action is not taken in the above manner we shall have lost the only decisive advantage that we may obtain over the enemy in the campaign just initiated, and the safety of our arms will run the gravest risk that can be imagined, if it be not mortally jeopardized. Grave decisions, energetic and rapid, are those which must be taken at the earliest possible moment without consideration of any class. The extreme gravity of the hour demands them.

Sgd.: J. F. Estigarribia,
Lt. Col. and Commander in Chief of the First Division.

At 9:30 A.M., on July 31st, the Chief Command sent to me the following telegraphic message:

Cyphered N. 10/37/1.

After the fall of Toledo, what is the condition of your troops for the defense of the Mennonites? What will be the situation of Boquerón and Isla Poí [Villa Militar] when the Mennonites are menaced? At this moment reinforcements are being embarked.

Sgd.: General Rojas,
General in Chief.

In the preceding message the Chief Command appear to have conjectured that the principal enemy attack would evolve by the side of the Mennonite colonies, but I had not this impression, since the enemy at Toledo showed little activity, while at the same time Boquerón was viciously attacked by numerous Bolivian troops. I replied at 11:40 A.M. on the same day as follows:

Chief Command,
Asunción.

Up to this moment it appears that the direction of the principal attack is towards Boquerón-Isla Poí. If this is confirmed and I can assemble my troops in time, I shall take a defensive stand at Isla Poí. My cavalry is reconnoitering towards Toledo. If the Mennonites are seriously threatened the situation at Isla Poí will be untenable.

Divinf.[13]

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[13] Abbreviation for División de Infantería (division of infantry).

The Chief Command did not desire to await the confirmation of the direction of the principal enemy attack and, always under the anxiety that I might be outflanked on the side of the Mennonite colonies,[14] on the same day, the 31st, at 11 P.M., they ordered me as follows:

P.C. in Asunción,
Command of Division,
Puerto Casado.

Proceed to assemble your infantry upon the railroad, maneuvering in retirement and without engaging in any isolated action. Select a position upon the railroad in order to check enemy advance, and with this object fortify yourself. The intention is to attract the enemy to the rear in order to offer him battle with our First and Second Divisions. The transportation of the Second Division will commence Monday. State where position is chosen which must be calculated in the time necessary to concentrate the Second Division in the same place.

Sgd.: Rojas,
Brigadier General, Commander in Chief of the Army.

Again, on the same day, the 31st, the Chief Command signed new instructions to me, which I received afterwards by plane, and in paragraph C they ordered me:

Inform the Chief Command of the plan of tactical maneuvers which will be taken by Division of Infantry No. 1 in its retirement movement upon the railroad.

The Chief Command had decided positively to forfeit all possibility of defense as far inland as Villa Militar, thus leaving in the hands of the enemy an extensive and important zone, including the Mennonite colonies. I judged such a decision exceptionally grave because it signified a confession of defeat before attempting any effort to detain the enemy in the interior and counteract in time the development of his plan of operations. Certainly, on the assumption of an enemy advance by the side of the Mennonite colonies, the evacuation of Villa Militar would have been inevitable; but at this time there was no clear indication that the Bolivians intended such advance, nor yet that they would march immediately from Boquerón, which they had entered that day, towards Villa Militar. Consequently, instead of following the directives of the Chief Command, I resolved, on the contrary, to assemble in Villa Militar all possible reinforcements by forced marches, displaying to this effect utmost activity.

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[14] Slightly to the northwest of Villa Militar, between that point and Fortín Toledo (see map No. 1), there are several colonies of Mennonite settlers. Those settlers came to the Chaco in the early 1920's from Canada, and later were joined by others from eastern Europe.

By not following the instructions received I apparently committed an act of disobedience, which however was not so when the circumstances of the moment are taken into account. The Chief Command did not view the situation calmly, and the subordinate may deviate from the orders received when he is convinced that his superior is not fully aware of the reality. To act in accordance with the facts, though by so doing one may stray from the line of conduct directed by the superior hierarchy, is not disobedience, but rather an indication of capacity and courage to assume both initiative and responsibility. The subordinate may anticipate that the superior, had he appreciated the situation correctly, would not have asked as he had ordered in the beginning and that, therefore, he would approve any correct modifications. Let us put from our minds for a moment all that happened subsequently, thanks to our permanence in Villa Militar, and to our later attack on Boquerón, and it will be comprehended that the abandonment of that area in those crucial moments would have prevented the possibility of punishing the invader as we did a few weeks later. All this appeared to escape the understanding of the Command in Asunción.

Asunción was overcome by a veritable state of bewilderment. On July 27th the Chief of the General Staff communicated with me as follows (the italics are mine):

Asunción, 27/7/32. 8 P.M.,
Cypher 28/47/2.

The march of great [enemy] effectives upon Nanawa is confirmed. The Chief Command order a general unrestricted levy, *no matter if it entails any momentary cessation in the work of the factories,* &.,&.

Esmag.[15]

But the following day the same Chief Command cancelled the unrestricted levy in a dispatch which said (the italics are mine):

Asunción, 28/7/32. 11:15 A.M.,
Cyphered 9/41/0.

You can make the mobilization of reservists in Pinasco, Casado, Sastre, San Lázaro *in such a manner that the factories will not cease to function.* Also you may impress any passengers on the boats.

Sgd.: General Rojas,
General in Chief.

On the one hand, it was not important that the work of the factories should be paralysed, but, on the other hand, we had to prevent such paralysis! Further, the latter dispatch suggested an original system of proceeding to the levy, namely, to impress the passengers on the ships which were making their voyages in that part of the littoral. Needless to say, there was not much to be hoped for the defense under such a system of levy.

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[15] Abbreviation for Estado Mayor General (general staff).

But there is no need to spend much time on such details. It suffices to note that everything combined to demonstrate that the Chief Command had no clear conception, either of what was being done or of what should be done.

Let us examine now the genesis of the operations which I had to put in practice, in face of the behavior of the enemy, to counteract his intentions and to wreck the Kundt plan, despite the scarcity of our means. In order to carry out my operational idea, the first point to be made clear was whether the enemy Command intended to adhere to his preconceived plan. Since the second part of July I had received from different sources the information that the enemy troops were being assembled in Saavedra, Muñoz, and Ballivián, and, at the same time, that the contingents of El Beni and Santa Cruz were directed towards Roboré-Puerto Suárez, and towards Charagua-Santa Fe, upon the Parapití River; further, other troops were proceeding from Villa Montes towards Carandayty. All of this revealed that the Bolivian mobilization was being realized in accordance with the plan outlined by General Kundt. On the other hand, the taking of Pitiantuta in the middle of June and of the Paraguayan *fortines* Corrales, Toledo, and Boquerón at the end of July confirmed the observance by the Bolivian disciples of the instructions of their German master.

After the capture of Boquerón the enemy had displayed little activity. It was logical to expect that he would make a speedy advance upon Villa Militar, but this did not materialize, which signified that things were not well either in the Bolivian camp. In the month of August, the Bolivians did nothing more than attack and occupy our Fortín Carayá on the 15th of the month, which we reoccupied on the 17th; and on the 19th they made a fruitless attack on Falcón. As we have seen, the possibility that the enemy would march rapidly upon Villa Militar had caused the hurried concentration upon this point of all our available troops. Now the immobility of the enemy enabled us to take the initiative.

Meanwhile the Command in Asunción had maintained silence upon the direction of the operations themselves, after their first order for a retreat, thereby permitting me to consider the situation more at leisure in order to adopt the necessary measures.

Action could and should be taken. But first the priority in which the enemy columns should be beaten and the selection of the direction of our principal effort must be established. A factor of primary importance in order to decide the extent to be given to the operations in the first moment was the special circumstances in which the war surprised Paraguay, deprived of every class of equipment and of preparation and with her possibilities extremely limited. It is not sufficient, as we know, to be well acquainted with the strategy in its peculiar characteristics, but one must likewise connect it with other spheres of action in order to give to it a concrete form of application in a particular case. Paraguay was a poor country; she could not count upon the immediate acquisition of the numerous elements that the campaign would demand. Again, in that terrible plight practically no benefit could be expected from our diplomacy, above all because it had always been badly administered, and secondly because the conditions of the country had not permitted us to interweave those vested interests which make friends and secure influence beyond the frontiers. Consequently, there was no base of support other than the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial and the heart of our soldiers. It is a commonplace that history plays a preponderant rôle among the factors that must be considered in the strategic field, and Paraguay could rely upon a tradition of gallantry without parallel.

The immediate requirement of the moment was to choose the direction which our principal effort should take and to fix the point where the stroke of the axe should fall so as to wreck the scaffold of the enemy plan. In this respect I had not to lose sight of the physical principle of reciprocal attraction of masses, which governs equally the military order, a principle whose application under the existing circumstances might bring about the absorption of the other enemy columns in formation, before they set out towards their objectives. Nor could I ignore the problem of water, which was scarce in all parts with the exception of the region of Arce crossed by an arm of the Verde River. And these considerations led me to a rather paradoxical solution, namely, to attack the enemy, not at his weakest point, but at the point which would guarantee the obtaining of the desired results. For this purpose the direction of Boquerón-Arce was evidently the best.

One might have been tempted also by the idea of launching our principal action upon Toledo, with the aim of rushing straightforwardly to Ballivián. A simple glance at the map seems to indicate that by this drive the enemy concentration at Arce-Saavedra-Muñoz could have been isolated by a single stroke. But such an idea was impracticable for various reasons. In the first place, in Toledo there was no water, and we had no certitude that we should find any on the road from Toledo to Ballivián. Further, there would remain on our flank a powerful enemy organization, to detain which a great mass of troops would be required which was not at my disposal. Finally, there was the lack of means of transport. Under these conditions I had to dismiss this alternative plan and to abide by the direction towards Boquerón-Arce.

Thus I arrived at a concrete definition of the general lines of our plan in its first stage. In order to apply it efficiently I needed more troops in the shortest possible time. With the troops which I could marshal at the beginning of August, an incomplete division of hardly 1,000 men—part of which was not yet in Villa Militar—I had naturally no base to attempt an offensive action of any extent. I should have to be thankful if, with these troops, I could organize a successful defense in Villa Militar.

Against my desire to obtain more troops I had the indecision of the Chief Command and their fear to undertake a campaign far from the river. In the instructions No. 1, dated July 24th, the Chief Command ordered the distribution of the troops along all the Paraguay River, from Bahía Negra to Asunción, that is to say, they fell into the error of scattering our little effectives in front of an enemy in full concentration. Under these conditions I saw disappearing the much desired possibility of forming rapidly in Villa Militar a force capable of flinging itself in the appropriate direction and crushing the intentions of the enemy.

Under the fear that our country was about to be led to neglect this momentous opportunity in its history I decided to send to the Chief Command the following message:

P.C., August 7, 1932,
(Secret N. 161)
To the Chief Command,
Asunción.

My troops will be ready and assembled in the region of Villa Militar by the end of the coming week and we shall be able to operate if we receive by this time the means of transportation the sending of which has been announced.

Consequently I ask for authorization to retake Boquerón, to take *fortines* Castillo and Yujra and to attack Fortín Arce.

I am expecting the requested arrival of a liaison officer in order to communicate to the Chief Command my plan of subsequent action, soliciting their approval.

Sgd.: José F. Estigarribia,
Lt. Col., Commander in Chief of the First Division.

The following day, August 8th, the liaison officer arrived at my quarters, and I immediately delivered to him the note which follows:

P.C. in Casanillo, August 8, 1932,
To the Chief Command of the Armed Forces,
Asunción.

I summarize below the intentions of this Command with reference to future operations:

1. The assembly of the troops of the First Division of Infantry is being rapidly effected in the region of Villa Militar, the direction nearest to the Bolivian positions at the present moment, and where we have a defensive organization which will serve to support them.

2. Because we have very few horses, towards the direction of Toledo we maintain a small picket of cavalry (half a squadron) for observation purposes.

3. In these conditions we are convinced of the urgent necessity to retake Boquerón and to attack vigorously the enemy *fortines* Castillo, Yujra, and Arce.

4. For this operation the energetic intervention of the regiment of infantry N. 1 would be required, which would consist in the capture of the Bolivian post of Agua Rica and Fortín Murguía, and then to attack, according to the circumstances and the reaction of the enemy, Fortín Saavedra, with the intention of retaining the greater quantity of enemy troops in this region and preventing their proceeding towards Arce.

5. If we have at our disposal (and may God make it possible) some more troops in addition to those of the First and Second Divisions, to throw against the enemy in the Toledo-Corrales region, it would be very good, because they would give us very precise impressions upon the reaction of the enemy from that direction. In any case they would always distract any enemy troops which thus would be prevented from co-operating in the direction of our principal attack.

6. Once in possession of Arce, and in accordance with the impressions which we should receive from the regions of Nanawa and Toledo, we could determine the direction that we must give to our offensive, either towards Fernández-Platanillos, or towards Alihuatá-Saavedra-Muñoz.

7. Permit me at this point to call attention to the importance presented by the direction Platanillos, for the following reasons: (I) It is a direction unprotected and nearest to the enemy on our right flank. (II) With our taking of Platanillos there would fall into our hands all the enemy troops remaining in the *fortines* of the north, which *fortines* would be cut off from their only communications with their base[16]; (III) We should menace the enemy's line of communication towards Ballivián and the enemy troops defending the region of Muñoz would not feel secure; (IV) Finally, if we had sufficient mechanical means of transportation and if the season were favorable, we could rush, after having replaced part of our troops and cattle, towards Saavedra and Muñoz, in order to complete the destruction of the Bolivian Fourth Division.

8. There can be deduced clearly from these intentions the necessity for great mobility, that is to say, sufficient means of transport and the opportune replacements of troops and cattle.

9. All of which logically implies the previous accumulation of sufficient victuals at least in Campo Esperanza, where we have depots, and, above all, the initiation of operations in the shortest possible time.

10. Permit me to note that we have at our disposal only twenty days of dry weather which will allow us to employ mechanical vehicles, in other words to employ rapidity.

11. I must note also that in the projected operations during the present dry period of the year it will be absolutely necessary to transport water for the troops.

Sgd.: José F. Estigarribia,
Lt. Col., Commander in Chief of the First Division.

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[16] I was not aware at that time of the existence of the enemy's communication which led through Camacho towards Carandayty.—J.F.E.

With the preceding document I sought to obtain the necessary equipment to undertake operations within what I considered to be the peremptory time offered by the little activity of the enemy, notwithstanding the time that we had already lost from the many vacillations resulting from the lack of faith in our own strength.

On August 15th the presidential change took place in Asunción. Dr. Eusebio Ayala succeeded Dr. José P. Guggiari as president of the Republic. The succession of the chief magistrate was accomplished by the Liberal Party previously in power, and the problem of the defense had virtually to be confronted by the same leaders of that political group, although Dr. Ayala distributed the major part of his cabinet positions among men new to the responsibility of a portfolio.

Dr. Ayala took the reins of power not only in the middle of the storm, but facing an expectation that was not entirely favorable to him. With relation to the Chaco problem his compromising temperament had been used against him, and he was believed to be too lukewarm for the man of the hour; or, in other words, the man to take up the glove that Bolivia had thrown down. The country was undoubtedly tired of the humiliations which, in order to evade the conflict, it had had to suffer in the face of the arrogance of Bolivia, which became more and more accentuated, and the national *amour propre* had been offended to the point of exasperation, which was, by the way, legitimate. As Dr. Ayala had advocated, in his recent presidential campaign, the necessity for settling the dispute pacifically and had even mentioned a plan for disarming the two countries, he was not believed to be a sufficiently fervent patriot for the occasion. In contrast, President Salamanca of Bolivia[17] typified in the strongest way the Bolivian determination not to yield one iota on the Chaco question and to crush Paraguay, if necessary.

Facts, happily, were soon to demonstrate that the misgivings concerning Dr. Ayala were without foundation. Dr. Ayala was, in fact, the man of the hour, above all because of his serenity and lucidity. He was, in the first place, expeditious, an essential condition in those days of perplexity and vacillation; and because he had confidence in himself, by speaking and acting with aplomb, he injected confidence in others.

To a vast international experience he added a remarkable dialectic agility with a certain paradoxical tinge and a rare ability for arriving at unexpected syntheses. Physically he gave one the impression of satisfaction, and the good humor that he habitually displayed engendered an atmosphere of optimism around him. Though his speech was not fluent (he never rose to great heights as an orator) he reasoned so aptly that it was pleasant to hear him when he enunciated his phrases, slightly interrupted by a certain stammering but full of meaning, and which eventually led to an original and pregnant conclusion. Further, he was wont to interpolate in his speeches opportune anecdotes, which he knew by the hundreds.

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[17] President Daniel Salamanca was inaugurated on March 5, 1931. Before his election as president, Dr. Salamanca had urged the use of strong methods in the Chaco in order to secure the permanent possession of this territory by Bolivia.

Yes, he was sometimes sharp when defending any theory near to his heart, and this habit left, at times, with his hearer, the sensation that he had an excessive fondness for his own ideas. In such cases, above all when faced by an objection, he became acrimonious, a fact which, without doubt, contributed to the making of more than one enemy.

Although at times it appeared that he permitted himself to be led too far by his speculative propensities, he never abandoned his keen practicalness in the problems he approached. And while he never departed on a single occasion from the attitude of confidence in diplomatic negotiations as a means of solving the conflict—even in those periods when the Chaco contest was established as a mortal duel without any other alternative but victory or sacrifice—he appreciated the difficulty of arriving at a satisfactory end for Paraguay without an exemplary punishment of the enemy. He showed throughout the course of the war an irrevocable consistency and an adamant patriotic firmness in those Paraguayan postulates for the cessation of the struggle enunciated by himself.[18]

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[18] Several plans were suggested during the Chaco War by different mediating agencies to bring about peace between Paraguay and Bolivia, and President Ayala of Paraguay insisted that they must fulfill the following requirements, or postulates:

1) Immediate cessation of hostilities;
2) Adequate securities against any possible resumption of the struggle;
3) Submission of the dispute over boundaries to arbitration or some other form of juridical solution;
4) Investigation of the responsibilities of the war in order to apply sanctions.

One of the serious obstacles for an agreement between the two contending parties had always been, before and during the war, President Ayala's postulate number 3, because Bolivia insisted that the ownership of the whole Chaco was the issue and that it must be, therefore, submitted indivisibly to arbitration, if that type of solution was selected; whereas Paraguay claimed that the dispute had to do only with a definition of frontiers in the interior of the Chaco. In other words, Paraguay would not admit that her ownership over the Chaco be questioned.

For all his sagacity in international affairs he fell at times into some errors, and sometimes, despite his proved personal valor and his apparent boldness, he lacked a certain amount of adventurous spirit. Withal Paraguay had the good fortune to find in President Ayala a most complete and most opportune man to conduct her in the midst of the storm created by this war.

It was not long before I felt the influence of the temperament of the new President in my post of command.

But the Chief Command, it appeared, remained in the same perplexity as always, and still imposed upon me the necessity for urging some action with the result that I forwarded the note written below:

P.C. in Casanillo, August 17, 1932,
Secret N. 168,
To the Chief Command of the National Forces.

I have received the secret note, without number, from the Chief Command, dated the 11th inst., and transmitted by the plane piloted by Lt. Trifón Benítez.

By the same source I have received the "appreciation of the situation" of the 10th inst. of the Chief Command.

I note that the contents of these documents deal with the same points planned by my Command in the secret note N. 165 dated the 8th inst. and sent by the liaison officer Capt. Ramón Ávalos Sánchez by plane.

There is then, at the bottom, happily, a complete accord in the points of view of general character, with the exception of some which you will permit me to indicate.

1. In either of the two documents I do not perceive that you have taken sufficiently into account the very concrete propositions of my secret notes N. 159 dated July 30th last, and N. 165 dated the 8th inst., which endeavored to show the great decisions which must be taken and the extreme urgency of completing beforehand our preparations as the only means of gaining an advantage over the enemy.

In the military history of the entire world there does not exist, in effect, a case in which an army inferior in number and in equipment would have waited until its superior adversary, with all his forces assembled. should inaugurate the operations. Consequently, I repeat again that the triumph of our arms depends, in substantial form, upon the rapidity with which we can launch ourselves upon the enemy in order to surprise him before his preparations are completed.

2. I am asked if, in formulating my plan of operations, I had thought of the reserves of the enemy and of the possible co-operation of troops from other sectors.

I do not believe that any plan of operation can be elaborated without taking into account those two capital points, which were considered in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of my secret note N. 165, above mentioned.

3. Permit me, further, to take note very respectfully to the Chief Command of the error in which we have fallen, namely, that of violating the principle, that in my judgment is of rigorous application in this particular case, and which consists in transporting the units with all their equipment to their point of concentration in order that we may employ them in an efficient manner from the first moment, if the necessity arises.

We not only transport dismantled units but we do not even provide the covering regiments up to this moment with the armaments and cattle that are absolutely indispensable and of extreme urgency in view of the fact that they are in contact with the enemy. I refer to the regiment Ytotoró of infantry N. 2, the regiment Curupayty of infantry N. 4, the regiment Col. Toledo of cavalry N. 2 and the battalion General Aquino sappers N. 1, which are assembled in the region of Villa Militar.

4. We must not neglect either the strict application or observance of the principle of the assembly of forces.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The necessity to unite, with the maximum celerity, all the troops and equipment of necessary mobility at the point where the principal action will be directed.

2. Initiate immediately the operation, before the enemy assembles all his elements (before the end of the present month).

3. Provide, most urgently, cattle, armaments, and other requested elements for the units of the First Division of Infantry, which is in contact with the enemy.

4. Send, without more delay, the mechanical means of transportation which must be obtained from any source.

5. Accumulate in a few days more victuals, munitions, and cattle for consumption in Campo Esperanza and in Villa Militar.

Sgd.: José F. Estigarribia,
Lt. Col. and Commander in Chief of the Division.

In the first half of August there arrived at Puerto Casado the first contingents of newly mobilized troops, but, as we have seen, on August 10th I received from the Chief Command the order to demobilize the reserves, so that by that time it was not yet known if Paraguay was really determined to defend herself against the Bolivian attack.

I had the impression in those days that Bolivia desired to gain time in order to complete her preparations, and I expressed this impression to the Chief Command in telegrams and notes.

I continued imperturbable in my resolution to organize the troops in order to undertake the campaign in the interior of the Chaco, and consequently I prosecuted concentration in Villa Militar. The silence kept by the Chief Command thereon led me to suppose that they had accepted my ideas, since they did not insist upon their original instructions. In view of all this I communicated to them the state of the concentration of my troops in a note which said:[19]

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[19] All the notes were forwarded to the capital by air.—J.E.F.

P.C., August 22, 1932,
To the Chief Command,
Asunción.

I communicate to the Command that the distribution of troops concentrated on this line is as follows:

Regiment Curupayty of infantry No. 4
Regiment Ytororó of infantry No. 2
Regiment Col. Toledo of cavalry No. 2
Battalion General Aquino of sappers N.1
} in Villa Militar;

Regiment Corrales of infantry No. 3, in Pozo Azul;
Group of artillery of the First Division, in Campo Esperanza;
Group of artillery of the Second Division, in Kilometer 160.

This latter group of artillery will be transferred during this week to a place where water exists upon the straight *picada*[20] leading from Kilometer 160 to Campo Esperanza, 20 kilometers before reaching the latter point.

I have ordered the regiment Valois Rivarola of cavalry N. 1 to proceed from its present camp (Kilometer 115 on the line of Pinasco) to occupy Laguna Capitán, 20 kilometers southeast of Villa Militar, in view of operations which I believe to be pending.

Sgd.: José F. Estigarribia,
Lt. Col., Commander in Chief of the First Division.

On the same date and by the same plane I sent my views upon the enemy in the following note:

P.C., August 22, 1932,
To the Chief Command,
Asunción.

Up to this moment the information given by our troops in contact with the enemy and the prisoners recently taken, together with the feverish activity of the enemy in the Boquerón-Arce region, lead to the supposition that the greater part of the Bolivian troops are assembled in this region. The prisoners make known, at the same time, that in Toledo there would be only one enemy company and in Platanillos there would be almost nothing, which would confirm that the enemy is assembled effectively in the region of Arce.

This circumstance must exercise its influence upon the method of our forthcoming operations, by reason of which I permit myself to bring the fact to the knowledge of the Command.

My troops will be irresistible provided that they can move without more delay, and for this purpose our problem consists in the means of transport which we must have to carry water.

On the other hand, our sources of water are diminishing rapidly, a fact that cannot have escaped the comprehension of the Command, in view of the assembly of troops and cattle in considerable numbers.

It is then imperative that we must make all necessary sacrifices to obtain the mechanical means of transport announced by the Chief Command without more delay, and further to initiate immediately the operations, upon the methods of which I should desire to convey my views through the intermediary of a liaison officer, if the Chief Command deem this admissible.

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[20] *Picada*—untranslatable. It is a narrow trail made by hacking away the most inconvenient branches and bushes in a thick forest to permit at least the passing through, in single file, of a column of mules and men. The word *picada* is used throughout the text.—J.F.E.

Bolivia cannot detain me; the important fact is that I can move at once if I can carry water for my troops.

Sgd.: José F. Estigarribia,
Lt. Col., Commander in Chief of the First Division.

I suppose that the assurance which I displayed in the foregoing documents concerning the resolutions which I had taken on my own account, as well as the situation of the enemy, contributed materially to create in my favor a firmer confidence on the part of the Chief Command. I had introduced into the picture many strong optimistic strokes, and these appeared to dissipate the gloomy atmosphere in which, due to the lack of knowledge regarding the precise military factors directly at play, prevailed in Asunción. As the reader will have observed I adopted measures which were far beyond my jurisdiction, by distributing troops which were not actually under my command, such as the group of artillery of the Second Division and the cavalry regiment Valois Rivarola No. 1. But the commanders of these units, eager that some action should be taken to check the enemy, obeyed me without any objection. The Chief Command in Asunción, far from disapproving my dispositions, evidently considered that circumstances had placed me in the position of leader in those preparations, and, consequently, on August 24th they appointed me Commander of the First and Second Divisions.

Naturally, from this moment my activities were more vigorous and covered a wider scope. Without any delay I ordered the Second Division, which was being organized in Concepción, to proceed to the Casado sector. In accordance with this order the division embarked on August 31st.

Undoubtedly great progress had been achieved by the adherence of the Chief Command to my manner of approaching the situation, but the principal necessity was still lacking, namely, the order for action, the authorization to deliver the blow.

Such were the conditions, when, on September 1st, in the early morning, there arrived at my Headquarters in Casanillo, Major Manuel Garay, sent by President Ayala to convey to me one of the most curious documents produced in the course of the Chaco War. Major Garay had travelled from Asunción to Puerto Casado by hydroplane and from there partly by auto-train and truck to Casanillo. At the moment of his arrival I had arranged to depart for Villa Militar to join my troops. The document to which I refer, and which was delivered to Major Garay by the President, is, textually, as follows:

(1) *TAKE BOQUERON.*

Object: (a) To demonstrate to the neutrals and other countries of America that Paraguay possesses military capacity.

(b) To give satisfaction to public opinion and to the army.

With this action it is hoped to gain better consideration in the eyes of the neutrals so that in their propositions they should not consider that Paraguay should always give in. Further, it is necessary that the troops prove their military capacity.

(2) *Having secured the OBJECTIVE sought, the troops should be returned to Isla Poí.*

EXECUTION

For the sake of international policy the Command must adopt such a plan so as not to appear to be the aggressor. To the outer world the collision must appear to be the consequence of reconnaissances and this must be made clear in reports previous to the action and afterwards.

Nevertheless, the military success must be assured by the employment of the necessary forces and must be conducted in such manner as to reach a rapid and full decision.

If success is obtained, the pursuit should be undertaken only to the extent necessitated by tactical reasons. In this case satisfactory pretexts for the return to Isla Poí must be found. For example: The doctor advises that the shelters should not be occupied because they are infected and should be burned; further, the water is found to be contaminated so that it would be dangerous to remain in Boquerón.

If the enemy eludes any decision the same pretexts for our return may be employed.

In case the enemy offers serious resistance or counterattacks immediately, thus stabilizing the combat, or succeeds in repulsing our troops, retirement should result as a consequence of the lack of water, since any further supply will be very difficult.

CONSEQUENCES

The enemy may proceed towards Isla Poí with important forces.

To anticipate this event all the troops at your command must have been already prepared at the initiation of the operation, since the possibility might arise that they would be required to support the forces engaged, in order, for instance, to facilitate their retirement.

In the event of strong forces advancing upon Isla Poí the Caballero detachment from Nanawa will co-operate with the forces under your orders, in which case you will communicate in time with the chief of that detachment.

CONCLUSIONS

The sole object of this instruction is to make known to the Command the extent which must be given to this operation and to the object sought.

It is important that the operation should appear as the result of an initiative on the part of the Command.

The document carried neither date nor signature and was in manuscript, though not in the handwriting of the President. In view of its anonymous form—its first peculiarity—I expressed to Major Garay the necessity for giving it some authenticity, and then Major Garay in his own handwriting placed at the foot of the note the following:

> I delivered this document into the hands of Lt.-Col. José F. Estigarribia, Commander in Chief of the First and Second Divisions, by order of the President of the Republic, Dr. Eusebio Ayala, today, the 1st of September, 1932, in Casanillo (Casado Line).
>
> M. Garay, Major.

Even when submitted to a superficial analysis, two essential features are outstanding in this document, *viz.*, too much scruple and too much timidity—both features demonstrating the moral and psychological state of the country at the outbreak of the conflict. According to it, it was to be avoided, at all costs, that Paraguay should appear as an aggressor, with which was proclaimed an almost superstitious deference to what our adversary insisted in deriding by deeds and words. Had not Bolivia committed exactly four notorious aggressions by capturing four of our *fortines*, three of which still remained in her hands? With our march upon Boquerón, a Paraguayan *fortín* seized by force, would it not be simply the rescue of our own by the same procedure employed by our adversary for its violent occupation? Or should there be for Bolivia a special international law to authorize her to take Paraguayan *fortines* without incurring any aggression, and should there be for Paraguay a different law compelling her to remain with tied hands under penalty of being disgraced by the brand of an aggressor?

I am aware of the primary consideration which the President would have in mind in recommending so much circumspection. He trusted always in the gravitation of the mediatory action of the neutral countries, believing that their moral authority would check Bolivia, and he desired that Paraguay should cast no shadow upon her conduct in order that her voice might receive a sympathetic hearing in the hour of tranquil discussion around the council table. Here we see how naïvely the reality was estimated in Paraguay. In that moment the world was witnessing the eclipse of those lofty ideals which presumed it possible to conceive that the moral strength of a country was sufficient to protect her from being overwhelmed by brute force.

The neutral mediators, in fact, were impotent; they had been so before, and they should be so again. Bolivia never accepted a single reasonable suggestion. She spoke to the council always haughtily, and she acted just as she chose. Nevertheless she never provoked them to any action against her. The neutrals possibly believed that Bolivia had the right to swagger because she was strong.

Paraguay, on the other hand, in her conduct, was the embodiment of respect, moderation, and prudence. In the document under discussion the President did not even authorize our permanence in Boquerón if we succeeded in recapturing it. He permitted us to retake the *fortín* only to show that we were plucky enough to pick a fight with Bolivia, and not to vindicate the possession of a property which was our own. He did not want to venture beyond a moral—but otherwise inconsequential—gesture, intended at most to impress the neutral mediators. But supposing this goal had been achieved, would it have prevented Bolivia from resuming her game of preying on Paraguayan *fortines* at will?

The document revealed our inferiority complex and its natural manifestation—timidity. Doubting that the Paraguayan army would ever be able to match its Bolivian rival successfully, the President made provision much more minute for the event of our defeat than for the event of our victory. In fact, according to this document, Paraguay had to dodge war: she had no ground for believing that she could emerge in good shape from an armed conflict. Here a decisive factor was again ignored, the only one upon which depended peace or war, namely, the Bolivian determination to seize the Chaco. It was not a question whether Paraguay desired or did not desire the war, but that the war was a factual reality, although quite apart from the will of Paraguay. There was no other alternative but to accept it with all its horrors or to bow the head and receive on the neck the weight of the heel of the invader, or, in other words, to disappear as a sovereign country. If with the humiliation imposed upon them by the retaking of Pitiantuta the Bolivians had launched themselves upon three of our *fortines*, what would they not do if we dislodged them from Boquerón, the key to a far-reaching plan of operations? To hope that after our retaking Boquerón the Bolivians would accept the recommendations of moderation made by the neutrals was an indication of naïveté. We had arrived at a situation such that, active or passive, Paraguay was at war with Bolivia, and our duty was simply to hasten the defense before it was too late.

But leaving aside all these critical considerations, the naked fact was that the document under examination, had, in my hands in those hectic hours, a considerable importance, signifying to me, despite all its circumlocutions and reticences, *the order to attack*. That the operation should or should not appear as the result of an initiative of my Command, was a point which I judged secondary, notwithstanding the fact that it obliged me to assume the responsibility entirely alone. The basic fact was that the government had decided to act, very cautiously, indeed, but it had decided just the same, and only by some decision could the salvation of Paraguay be attempted.[21]

I acknowledged receipt of the presidential instructions with a letter the pertinent part of which is as follows:

Villa Militar, September 3, 1932,
Dr. Eusebio Ayala,
Asunción.

My dear Mr. President:

I have received with lively pleasure and interest the suggestions that, in your name, have been delivered to me by Major Manuel Garay.

The only objection that I permit myself to formulate would concern the exceedingly strict limitation of our advance. I believe in the advantage to be gained by launching ourselves decidedly beyond Boquerón, if we can count upon water, for which we need more trucks and watertanks adapted thereto, which we requested more than a month ago. If from the point of view of our international situation it will entail no disadvantage, it is necessary that we move with a view to the destruction of the enemy divisions which we have in front, in whose destruction I firmly believe, provided that we have water and preparation is made for the indispensable replacements of men and horses.

For the advance beyond Boquerón I think we may employ the same procedure as that for the initial advance and in conformity with the suggestions which I have received.

I am actively taking care of the necessities for the onslaught upon Boquerón and I have ordered the preparatory movements for the assembly of the troops in the region of Villa Militar [Isla Poí]. Immediately after the concentration is accomplished, which I believe will be at the end of the coming week, we shall resolutely launch ourselves [against the enemy].

Sgd.: José F. Estigarribia.

Such was the genesis of our march upon Boquerón.

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[21] Observe also that the order for attack emanated from the President and not from the Chief Command.—J.F.E.

CHAPTER III

Boqueron and Its Repercussions

At that moment the situation of the Bolivian army, according to our information, was as follows:

One of the Bolivian divisions was being mobilized in the region of Puerto Suárez; another in the region Roboré-Ravelo-Ingavi; another in the region Charagua-Casa Alta-Santa Fe; another in the region Carandayty-Capiírendá-Villa Montes; another in the region Camacho-Platanillos; and another in the region Arce-Saavedra-Muñoz. (See Map No. 2.)

I was fully aware of the great quantitive superiority of the Bolivian army over ours; but I resolved to take all the advantage of their wide dispersion which originated from the error of their having been assigned to more than one objective. The Paraguayans, though massively outnumbered, were in a position that enabled them to make their principal concentration wherever they chose and to detach from the main army only small groups for the defense of Bahía Negra, Coronel Bogado, Pitiantuta, the Toledo region, and Nanawa. So immediately after receiving the presidential order referred to in the previous chapter, we were able to march towards our objective, that is, towards Boquerón.

Leaving Bahía Negra, Coronel Bogado, Pitiantuta, and the Toledo area to be guarded by token forces, on September 3rd I directed to the detachment of Nanawa the following instructions:

P.C., September 3, 1932.
Instructions for the Detachment of Major Caballero Álvarez.

1) The Command of the First Army Corps which has been constituted on this line has also jurisdiction of command over your detachment by virtue of which it imparts these instructions. 2) In the operations of all our troops the mission of your detachment shall consist in attacking the advanced positions of the enemy *with the object of retaining in that region the greatest possible quantity of enemy troops and thus preventing their intervention in the theater of our principal action.* 3) To this end, once you receive the order, which will be telegraphed, you shall dislodge the enemy from Samaklay and make contact with the troops of Fortín Murguía in order vigorously to storm this latter position also, if the reaction of the enemy does not present before your advance a number of troops sufficiently strong to prevent your action. 4) In the event that you take Fortín Murguía you shall make contact with the enemy troops at Saavedra, upon whose position your detachment shall make a demonstrative but not a decisive action. 5) If the enemy reaction is so powerful, either upon Saavedra or upon Murguía, that it impedes your advance, you shall try to retain the terrain gained; but if the enemy threatens to destroy your detachment you may maneuver in retirement upon Samaklay and even upon Nanawa, behind whose fortifications you will be in a better

condition to make a more effective defense. 6) If in the course of your maneuver in retirement the enemy diminishes or abandons the pressure upon your troops you shall return to the attack, *never losing sight of the fundamental necessity of retaining the greatest possible quantity of enemies in that zone without permitting them to destroy you.* 7) From this moment you shall give precise instructions and detach, if it be necessary, a fraction of cavalry in order that, immediately after you receive advice from this Command, starting from Gondra or Falcón, it shall undertake the destruction of the telegraph lines which connect Saavedra with Alihuatá and Arce. On receiving these instructions you shall inform me of the time that the said fractions of troops will need to accomplish the mission assigned to them in the present paragraph. 8) Keep me constantly informed of your situation in all the course of the operations. Especially keep me advised of the hour of your departure from Nanawa, of the result of the action upon Samaklay and successively upon Murguía and Saavedra. Further, you shall send me daily reports of your news from the day following your receipt of the present instructions. My Post of Command henceforth is in Villa Militar (Isla Poí).

José F. Estigarribia,
Commander in Chief.

On September 5th I summoned all the chiefs and officers of grouped units to Villa Militar in order to brief them and to define what in my judgment would be the character of the war in the Chaco. "We are," I told them, "about to wage a *war of communications,* in which that army which succeeds in dominating the communications of its enemy will be victorious." We were preparing ourselves, in effect, for a struggle in a waterless desert.

On the 6th, at 2 P.M., I dictated the order to advance for the following day. I was determined that our army, owing to its numerical inferiority, should always occupy a central position with respect to the enemy. In the opening operation I sacrificed momentarily this advantage since I decided to attack one of the flanks of the widespread enemy formation; but I intended to recover our central position as soon as circumstances permitted—which was actually accomplished afterwards.

On the 7th, at 4 A.M., we departed from Villa Militar with 3,500 men of the three arms, divided into two columns, the main, which took the so-called Camino Viejo, and the other, secondary, which followed by the Recta[22] from Villa Militar to Boquerón. I was at the head of the main column. Our advanced patrols meanwhile maintained contact with the enemy troops in Boquerón at a distance of 15 kilometers more or less from the *fortín.*

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[22] As the Chaco is almost uninterruptedly flat, roads or paths were usually opened or blazed across it in straight lines for many kilometers. Those roads or paths were called *rectas* (straight lines, in Spanish) by the belligerents. Marshal Estigarribia preserves this denomination for one of the roads between Villa Militar and Boquerón.

(Editor's collection)

Partial view of Villa Militar, General Headquarters of the Paraguayan army in the Chaco. The causeway in the center crosses the lagoon which was the only source of water for the Paraguayan troops during their attack on Boquerón, September, 1932.

(Benjamin Banks collection)

A typical straight road, called *recta* by the belligerents, opened in the Chaco during the war. Some of these *rectas* stretched out over hundreds of kilometers without the slightest deviation.

In the afternoon, while I was dictating my orders for the attack of the following day, there appeared above us the first Bolivian planes, and they dropped some bombs. We passed that night with our vanguards in contact with the enemy.

The following day, the 8th, we rolled back all the advance guards of the enemy and made contact with the first positions of Boquerón. True to my idea that the Chaco war would be a war of communications, I endeavored in my orders at this initial stage to shut off the enemy from the roads leading to his base. I ordered our cavalry therefore to cut the communications of the Boquerón garrison, while the infantry proceeded to surround the *fortín.* By this method I proposed also to destroy the Bolivian troops in the vicinity, who logically would come to the assistance of Boquerón. Therefore it was essential that our troops engaged in the cutting of the roads should be of sufficient force to defeat later any other enemy troops which might be detached for intervention in the battle.

I based my resolution on the assumption, whose correctness was soon to be borne out by facts, that the enemy would commit the error of employing separate portions of his forces as they arrived, an error encouraged in such circumstances by the anguished appeals of the besieged.

But the accomplishment of these intentions was bound to encounter more than one serious snag. The war had scarcely begun. Our officers and soldiers had yet no experience. We were unfamiliar with the terrain, and we had a scarcity of maps. We were extremely short of every necessary element.

On Friday the 9th, at dawn, the deployment of our troops commenced. Under the darkness of the previous night they had already gained their positions of preparation, and our infantry had cut the road from Boquerón to Yujra. The cavalry, on the other hand, charged with the task of covering the exterior line, could not move. I had believed, through lack of knowledge of the terrain, that this preliminary mission of the cavalry could be accomplished at the gallop by the side of the wood surrounding Boquerón, but this position was under the fire of the machine guns of the *fortín.* For this reason the cavalry not only found it impossible to act in the manner ordered, but in order to proceed they were compelled to open paths through the wood, suffering dire penalties, all of which delayed their arrival at the Yujra road until the 10th.

That first day of battle was replete with lessons for us. In the first place, we had to discard as impracticable the attempt to overrun Boquerón in one single day of attack. The *fortín* had very powerful defenses and was occupied by forces much superior to what we had anticipated. Our calculations had assumed a garrison of 400 or 500 men, but actually the number of occupants of Boquerón was no fewer than 2,000.[23] Further, the *fortín* was surrounded by three lines of barbed-wire trenches. The movement in open field which some of our brave soldiers attempted to accomplish under the trajectory of the machine guns of the defense, and contrary to a special warning, served only to incur considerable losses.

The cavalry learned that from now on they must abandon their horses and march and fight on foot like the infantry. This situation was brutally imposed upon them by the scarcity of our means of transport in general and the lack of water and pasturage in the Chaco. At that time the only water supply which could provide our army was in Villa Militar, and this was insufficient and temporary. On the 10th there was no longer any doubt that the battle would last many days, and meanwhile the water at Villa Militar would diminish more and more until our soldiers would be exposed to privation. Confronted by this formidable problem I was impelled to arrive at an extremely painful decision, namely, to order that the horses be left without water. Naturally, after a few days all our horses perished.

The disappearance of the cavalry was a tragic lesson. Horses, which our country possessed in some abundance, had to be discarded as a means of defense, and in their place we had to resort to motorization, for which we were not at all prepared.

From the 10th day forward I had the distinct impression that the enemy Command had fallen into the error which I foresaw, that of throwing into the struggle fractions of troops hurriedly sent, and this encouraged me to insist more and more upon the procedure of destroying them piecemeal. On that day the Bolivian regiment of infantry No. 14 was rushed by forced marches to the aid of Boquerón, but without taking care to establish any service of security. This regiment, composed of the best youth of Oruro, was annihilated, its commander, Major Adolfo Lairana, and a few soldiers alone escaping.

In view of the confirmation that the enemy was committing such faults as indicated above and the difficulty of taking Boquerón rapidly and by sheer force, and being also confronted by the problem of transportation which forced us to employ as means of locomotion mechanical traction, I decided, as was logical, upon a methodical siege of the enemy position and endeavored to strengthen our troops who were fighting on the exterior line, that is, against the Bolivian units coming to the assistance of Boquerón.

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[23] General Carlos Quintanilla, commander in chief of the Bolivian First Army Corps which operated in the Casado sector at the commencement of hostilities, said in a manifesto that "the effectives of the Paraguayan army at Boquerón" were twelve thousand men "amply equipped." Yet our forces did not reach more than 3,500 men, and certainly very poorly equipped, since we lacked even rifles for some units. The "ample" equipment of the Paraguayan army began with the first reverses of the enemy, and more particularly with the actions around Boquerón in September, 1932.—J.F.E.

In this manner our infiltrations commenced through the wood, while our troops which advanced in open field dug sinuous trenches, the only course we could adopt since we did not possess sufficient artillery nor of necessary caliber to demolish the enemy defenses.

Under these circumstances I tried to shift, if I may use the expression, the center of gravity of our effort toward the north side of the *fortín,* which was on the side of the wood. Therefore not before the 11th could we effectively intercept the other road of access to the besieged enemy, which led from Boquerón to Fortín Ramírez.

During the days that followed, the episode of the destruction of the Bolivian regiment No. 14 invariably was repeated with other Bolivian units, and thus we were able to obtain the armaments which we lacked to complete the equipment of the regiments arriving from Asunción, half armed.

Notwithstanding this rich harvest of war material and the weakening of the enemy, we could not afford to prolong our siege beyond a certain limit of time. The water supply at Villa Militar, the only one at the disposition of our troops, was decreasing at an alarming rate. According to our estimate, when we left for Boquerón, it would last only one month. On the other hand, we had calculated that the Bolivian army would require three months to place in the battle front of the Chaco its mobilized divisions. We had supposed, on good grounds, that this mobilization would have started in the first days of July, and these three months were almost ended. We should have to wait for those newly mobilized divisions under other conditions, that is to say, with all our troops assembled and arrayed in proper formation.

While the battle was being prosecuted furiously with the besieged in Boquerón as well as with those arriving to their aid, the Chief Command sent to me on the 23rd a communication which, from the general point of view, might have had an important bearing on our situation. According to it, the forces of the Bolivian Generals Lanza and Pando, commanders of the enemy troops which were assembled in the region of Roboré-Ravelo-Ingavi (see Map No. 2) were coming down to the south. This information placed me in the position of doubting whether they would march towards Pitiantuta or whether they had been called by the commander of the troops defending Boquerón.

When the narrowing of our circle around Boquerón had brought us to the foot of the principal barbed-wire defenses, I received on the 24th a report from the Quartermaster of Villa Militar announcing that the water in the lagoon from which we got our supply was in the process of decomposition. In a few more days we should be deprived entirely of this vital element. Apart from Villa Militar there existed no water supply except on the Paraguay River, and to bring water from there was impossible, because, in the first place, the railroad from Puerto Casado did not possess sufficient material for its transportation, and further because we had no trucks to accomplish transportation in the second stage, namely, from Punta Rieles (railroad terminal) to the troops. In such a plight there was no other alternative but to take Boquerón, which had water. Until that day I had made every effort compatible with the struggle to economize the lives of our soldiers, but pressed by this ominous information a decision to subdue the enemy positions at the cost of any sacrifice had to be made, and this I resolved to do.

I took the most strict measures to keep secret the bad news. At that time I received the information that an enemy force was approaching from the side of Ramírez, and in order to have in hand more troops to assist the assault on the 24th I ordered an attack upon that force. At 1 o'clock in the morning of the 25th the Paraguayan column detached to accomplish the attack began its maneuver, marching through the wood, and at the dawn of day fell suddenly upon the Bolivians who numbered about 400 men and who defended themselves fiercely. By 3 P.M. they were overwhelmed, leaving in our hands a good many prisoners and material of all kinds.

On the same day, the 25th, at 2 P.M., I dictated the order for the general assault on the following day, which reads, in part, as follows:

> At the zero hour all the units of the first line in close connection with each other were resolutely to attack the enemy positions confronting them. A strong detachment of the First Division, which will extend to the right wing of infantry regiment No. 6, will attack the extreme east of the length of wood which surrounds Boquerón and will use every effort to break the line of enemy defense at this point. Regiment of infantry No. 6, having turned its right wing towards the east, will assist and accompany the effort of the detachment of the First Division and will take the enemy trenches facing the said wing.
>
> The First Division will leave sufficient troops upon the road which leads from Boquerón to Fortín Ramírez in order to protect it against possible incursions of the enemy from that direction.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

A group of Paraguayan soldiers in the Chaco. The type of construction used in the *fortines* can be seen in the background.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Another group of Paraguayan soldiers.

The Second Division will adopt the same procedure with respect to the enemy on the side of Fortín Yujra, &c., &c.

After a most stubborn struggle, which lasted throughout the entire day of the 26th, our troops had arrived by night within distance to assault the second line of the enemy defenses. Then I addressed the following proclamation to the army, which was one of the few that I issued in the course of the campaign:

P.C., September 26, 1932,
To the chiefs, officers and soldiers of the First Army Corps:

I pay the tribute of my applause to the brave chiefs, officers and soldiers of the First Army Corps for their magnificent accomplishment of today which has placed our soldiers in the position that they have always merited: at the head of the best soldiers in the world.

The powerful line of enemy defense has been broken in three parts, our soldiers, with their machetes, opening their way to cross through thick barbedwire fences, and assaulting machine gun nests and successive lines of trenches.

All must remain firmly upon the terrain conquered, and continue their assaults tomorrow with the same gallantry and the same irresistible bravery of today in order to subdue the last resistances of the enemy for the imperishable glory of the army and of the country.

Sgd.: Estigarribia,
Lt.-Col. and Commander in Chief.

On the 27th we made a pause in order to reorganize and resupply the units of assault, and we occupied ourselves in repulsing an attack of fresh enemy troops on the side of Fortín Ramírez.

On the 28th the onsets were renewed. At 8:45 A.M. our regiments No. 2 and No. 6 were the first to break, at the point of the bayonet, the second line of enemy defense, and at the end of the day they had reached the foot of the last enemy entrenchment.

On the 29th, at 5:15 A.M., we continued our furious assaults. But at 6 o'clock Lt.-Col. Marzana, commander of Fortín Boquerón, facing the inevitable, requested a parley. Almost at the same hour the Bolivian troops raised the white flag along all their line, and surrendered. At 7:25 o'clock Lt.-Col. Marzana was brought to my presence to offer his surrender.

Lt.-Col. Marzana is a man who impresses one well. He appeared before me in a military manner, visibly affected, saluted me, and stated that, in face of the fury of my troops, and the impossibility of any longer repulsing their assaults, he came to offer the capitulation of himself and of the forces under his command in order to prevent an unnecessary massacre. Despite his understandable emotion his voice was firm. I replied that, at that moment, Fortín Boquerón was already in our power, and in response to his request

I answered that his life and those of all his officers and soldiers were fully guaranteed.

Thus ended the first major episode of the war. Though at the price of a heavy toll, Paraguay had just won a signal victory. Our troops, only half armed up to the present, collected in Boquerón war equipment in relative abundance, which would enable them to continue the struggle under easier conditions. But the importance of our success lay, above all, in the moral repercussion it was bound to have in the one and the other camps, a repercussion which would have a lasting influence in the later course of the campaign. The fall of Boquerón abetted the faith of our soldiers and the whole of Paraguay in ultimate victory, filled them with confidence in their Command and their Government, and gave to the army a solid unity. After Boquerón the war would not be viewed in our country as an unequal struggle with a powerful enemy. Previously Paraguay was determined, with unshakable firmness, to dispute inch by inch with the invader the conquest of her territory, but she had little hope of inflicting upon Bolivia an exemplary punishment; in other words, she was suffering from something like a condition of heroic resignation. By our victory of September 29th that depressive perspective was banished from the soul of Paraguay. Our people were suddenly aroused by a strong wave of optimism, which later would not abandon them and which would serve to overcome with marvellous tenacity the most harrowing sacrifices.

On the other hand, Boquerón was an absolute triumph of Paraguayan strategy. It not only struck a shattering blow upon the morale of the enemy and obliterated a sizeable portion of his permanent army, but it produced the irreparable collapse of a comprehensive plan which had been carefully elaborated. Boquerón revealed to Bolivia, with a bitter awakening, that the war of the Chaco was not to be such as was supposed and desired by President Salamanca—an easy and resounding conquest destined to harvest prestige at the cost of a weak neighbor—but a duel to the death that eventually would oblige our adversary to renounce his utopian dream.

Shocked and taken aback by this surprising turn of events, Bolivia hardly recovered from it during the rest of the war; and at the time of its occurrence she could find no other resort than to dismiss her Chief of the General Staff.

CHAPTER IV

In Search of Water: Arce—Detention in Front of Saavedra

Boquerón powerfully raised the morale of our officers and troops, hastened their training, and increased their material means of action. But for the purpose of the immediate prosecution of the offensive the scarcity of transport for the general supply beyond the region already reached presented a grave obstacle. Moreover, after twenty days of incessant battle the soldiers needed some rest. A general reorganization was in order and future actions ought to be prepared, and especially for the latter, we had to dig more wells in Boquerón in order to secure a permanent supply of fresh water.

While these necessities were actively being undertaken, the doubt persisted with regard to the direction of the march of the enemy troops under Generals Pando and Lanza, which up to that time had not made themselves felt. Since in the Toledo region an action of the enemy would be more dangerous for us than in any other region, I ordered that the handful of troops with which we had taken Toledo the same day we took Boquerón should try also to reconquer our Fortín Corrales in order that we might be informed of the intentions of the enemy in that region. On October 7th I received the report that Corrales had fallen into our power without any resistance.

Since October 1st I had information from Asunción that the enemy would make Nanawa the principal objective of his forthcoming operations. This advice, together with the easy capture of Toledo and Corrales and the complete passivity of the enemy in that zone, gave me momentary security on that side and confirmed the disruption of the enemy plan owing to the absorption of his troops in the extreme south of his vast front of deployment.

On the 7th I ordered the prosecution of our offensive movement for the day following. On the 8th our troops easily captured the Bolivian Fortín Ramírez whose occupants were dispersed. With this action our right wing could go forward to make contact with the line of the advanced posts of the new position prepared by the enemy, which extended between the *fortines* Cabo Castillo and Yujra. Then we made contact with the enemy position itself in our center and on our left, where the enemy defended himself in trenches aligned one behind the other. On the 9th we reduced one of those positions on our left and captured a Bolivian battalion.

On the 10th we broke the second enemy line towards Yujra; at the same time we swept ahead our right wing. On the 11th we took by assault Puesto Lara and Fortín Cabo Castillo, and thus the new enemy line on its left wing was cracked. From that point we made incursions towards the enemy rear and precipitated the same day the collapse of all the enemy front. Many Bolivian officers, among them Lt.-Col. Humberto Cárdenas, fell into our power. We took further pieces of artillery, machine guns, rifles and other equipment in great quantity.

Yet, for all the extraordinarily favorable situation in which we found ourselves it was not possible to accelerate our progression because of the absence of means of transportation to supply the troops. In a dispatch of the 12th I notified Asunción of this circumstance. And, curiously enough, on the same day the Minister of War informed me that the Government considered it necessary to stave off the destruction of our garrison of Nanawa which was menaced by the powerful enemy offensive previously announced. In this manner my Command was placed in a peculiar position. I was ordered to forestall a development seemingly imminent, far from the front, but I was not provided with means of mobility indispensable to effect the desired succor. Very wisely, without doubt, the Government warned me of the danger, but they evaded all responsibility though knowing that I was not in a condition to give any assurance of averting it.

Withal I remained tranquil because I thought that the gravitation of the presence and the actions of our troops in the direction which we had taken would constitute a sufficient deterrent for the enemy and prevent him from throwing any great force in the region of Nanawa.

On the 13th I summoned the divisional commanders to my P.C. in Fortín Cabo Castillo to inform them of the general situation, to explain my intentions, and to order the prosecution of the movement in the only form which would be feasible at that moment, namely, through the action of our vanguards, until the main body of the troops could move after having received the indispensable means of transport. This proceeding was facilitated by the method adopted by the enemy, which consisted of successive positions in echelon form upon their road of retreat, each one of which was distant from the other by several kilometers and was defended by troops numbering one or two regiments. I had to take precautions also on the side of Fortín Fernández which we were leaving on our flank and through which I knew Bolivian forces which must not be neglected were passing. As a consequence the advance of our vanguard had to be accompanied by numerous patrols to guard their flank on the west.

On the 18th I received the information that the first fourteen trucks of the fifty which I had requested had arrived. On the 19th a report from Toledo informed me that our telephonic patrol at Corrales had confirmed the fact that the enemy *fortines* in that region were very inadequately manned. On the same day, and following a new conference of the divisional commanders in my P.C., I gave the order for the movement of all our troops, on the following day, towards Arce.

At the zero hour of the 20th the general movement commenced and it rolled back, one after the other, the echelon positions of the enemy, defended by the Bolivian regiments Nos. 16, 20, 35, and 45, which sought refuge in Arce in a disorderly flight.

On the 22nd we approached the principal position of Arce. On advancing our troops took many prisoners together with many pieces of artillery, machine guns, rifles, *et cetera*, abandoned by the enemy.

On the 23rd at 1:30 P.M. we occupied Arce, which was aflame. We found six pieces of artillery, one hundred machine guns, and a thousand rifles totally burned. Enormous deposits of victuals, clothing, and other equipment were the prey of the flames.

With the taking of Arce we accomplished the first strategic leap provided for in my initial plan. Accordingly, we had to consolidate the general situation so as to adopt new resolutions. With this object we extended our antennae in order to retake Falcón and to capture the enemy *fortines* Alihuatá and Fernández. We organized, at the same time, a rapid attack upon Platanillos with the double intention of guarding, on that side, against possible incursions of the enemy, as I expressed in the previous chapter, and to bring about the fall of the series of Bolivian *fortines* situated to the north of Platanillos, *viz.*, Jayucubás, Loa, Bolívar, and Camacho, in the erroneous supposition that, beyond Camacho, there was no more communication with the north. Thus also we should leave the enemy in doubt concerning the true direction of the advance of our principal column.

But our line of supply having been prolonged by 27 kilometers, our means of transport were still insufficient despite the fact that we had taken Arce, an important source of water and one of our objectives. We were always materially unable to undertake rapid action, such as current circumstances demanded. Therefore, we had to give to those movements more or less distant from our main column the character of incursions, and of very limited duration. Such was the character imposed by the conditions of the moment on our strike upon Platanillos.

On the 25th at 6 P.M. we made our entry into Falcón, which was completely burned and abandoned by the enemy. On the 26th at 1 o'clock we took Alihuatá where we collected a large quantity of machine guns, rifles, munitions, and victuals.

Those actions were executed with an energy and a celerity really amazing. The enemy could not recover from his bewilderment. The Bolivian soldiers, in their desperation, spread through the woods, blinded and without direction, where they went astray and perished of thirst by the hundreds, despite the fact that we made unheard of efforts to bring assistance to them by means of expeditions that we sent in all directions carrying water on the backs of the men.

From the 27th we were in contact with our own troops in Nanawa.

On the 30th we took Fortín Fernández, and, since the reinforcements of means of transport which we had requested did not arrive, we had recourse to the extreme measure of suspending momentarily the transports from the rear guard in order to assemble in Arce a sufficient number of trucks which would permit the transportation of water to the attacking force at Platanillos.

Our First Division of infantry, the unit appointed to accomplish this mission, mobilized speedily in Fernández, and on November 5th at 4 o'clock A.M. marched upon Platanillos. That day they covered a distance of 37 kilometers. On the following day at 9 o'clock they fell upon the enemy *fortín* and in the middle of the day, captured it. The Bolivian regiment Colorados, which defended Platanillos, was dispersed, leaving in our hands many documents among which appeared some instructions from General Kundt, dictated when he was the Chief of the General Staff of the Bolivian army, in the event of a war by Bolivia against Perú, Brazil, or Argentina.

The regiment of cavalry on foot which operated by the side of Corrales in co-operation with our First Division had taken in those days the *fortines* Bolívar, Loa and Jayucubás, and they were now in contact with Platanillos. But by that time we knew that Camacho was in communication with the north through Carandayty (as shown in Map No. 2), and this brought about a change fundamental, to a certain extent, in the entire picture. On the hypothesis that there was no road beyond Camacho, my first intention had been to obtain security on that side, and then, free from all care concerning our right flank, to push our action upon Saavedra. But now that the said hypothesis had proved erroneous there was revealed to us the possibility that the enemy might appear upon our rear and even, passing through Toledo, might arrive at Campo Esperanza. If I had known beforehand that the enemy could arrive at Camacho from the opposite direction without passing through Platanillos, Loa, Bolívar and Jayucubás, I certainly should not have submitted our troops to the exhausting strain of previously covering those regions, but I should have concentrated all our forces upon Saavedra with a better probability of taking this position.

On the 9th I ordered our First Division to retire to Arce leaving the guarding of that extensive zone in charge of regiment No. 1 of cavalry. Among the reasons which prompted me to adopt that plan I figured the impossibility of supplying a greater number of troops in the said region and the fact that the main force of the enemy was in Saavedra, against which we had effectively to defend our important water supply of Arce. Further, we had to try to destroy, if it were possible, the enemy in Saavedra. Notwithstanding the shortness of our means of action in those days, our Second Division of infantry established contact with the advanced guards of Saavedra at some ten kilometers from the *fortín,* and from November 8th our Fourth Division had orders to draw near to the Second Division. These marches and the transportation necessary to supply the troops were accomplished under most harrowing conditions because of our scarcity of equipment and the fact that the rains had converted the road into quagmires. Needless to say, among my most urgent requests to the Chief Command in Asunción was always that for trucks. I also requested them to send without delay the regiment of cavalry San Martín, which was being organized in Asunción, in order to be forwarded to Toledo.

On the 10th the enemy at Saavedra launched a furious attack with nine regiments of infantry and one of artillery upon our Second Division, which was composed of three regiments. After four hours of bitter struggle, at times hand to hand, the successive waves of Bolivian troops were completely swept away, and our forces remained in possession of the terrain without retreating a step. The enemy left on the field of action five hundred dead, and in our power six hundred prisoners. We gathered thirty-one machine guns, a thousand rifles, besides an innumerable assortment of other items. In the orders for the operations of the enemy, which also fell into our power, everything was anticipated, including the retaking of Arce. The deception of the enemy respecting the direction of our principal force had been produced. Once more, because of the scarcity of our means of transport, we could not take advantage of this magnificent opportunity to undertake a substantial action which probably would have given us the possession of Saavedra and the other *fortines* towards Nanawa and further to the south.

Our pursuit after the repulse of the enemy was short, at most two or three kilometers. Our Fourth Division, which was some kilometers behind the Second, could not even proceed fast enough towards the line of combat.

Again we had lost a very promising chance but we could ask no more from our troops. The lack of means of transport had submitted them to a racking exertion. After incessant marches on foot, after fighting without any respite, after maneuvering through the prickly woods in the midst of terrific hardships, tormented by rain and sun and the small dust of the Chaco which permeated everything, our forces had diminished considerably, to which must be added that, from the middle of November, we suffered an epidemic of grippe and dysentery which affected fifty per cent of the officers and troops, so that the slackening of our pressure upon the enemy was explicable. Further, by the number of regiments that the enemy had employed in the last action and from the information which we received from all sources which indicated that more and more Bolivian units were arriving at Saavedra, I understood that we were facing very large enemy effectives. Withal, over those roads which were in fact impassable swamps, covered by deep mud, we succeeded in sending replacements of men and supplies for their most urgent needs.

On the 26th our First Division of infantry arrived in front of Saavedra, and on the 30th I ordered a movement upon that *fortín* in conjunction with Nanawa. My intention was to flank the enemy position on the west with one entire division. After an elaborate preparation the First Division charged with the movement accomplished the first part of the same during the night—in which the moon was very clear—in order to escape the observation of the enemy planes. But the officer patrol which had operated in the preliminary survey and was guiding the division in its movement, went astray and, after having marched all the night, found itself, at dawn, together with the vanguard which had marched a little distance from the main body, upon the extreme of the enemy's left wing, instead of appearing much behind. Indeed, this produced much alarm among the Bolivians, but it was easy for them to call upon their reserve troops since the Paraguayans in reality appeared upon a simple prolongation of their line. The Paraguayan troops, instead of surprising the enemy, were themselves surprised, and they had to engage the enemy in very inauspicious conditions, in open field. Naturally they suffered heavy casualties. We gained ground in various sectors but we were afterwards checked on all sides. This failure in which we lost precious time, an element of exceptional value to us, was to have a lingering effect.

In the general action we had consumed our stock of munitions, which we could not replace because of the continuous rains. Transportation was all but absolutely impossible. The Bolivians, on the other hand, transported troops and material in their great trimotor planes. On December 4th the Commander of Nanawa reported to me that he had munitions only for one day. In reply to my requests to Asunción for more troops, they offered me men without arms. The only plane at our disposal up to this time had been shot down by the enemy.

On the 10th I ordered the rectification of the line and rest for the troops which had been operating in the Saavedra front.

On the 12th numerous enemy troops appeared before Platanillos and on the following day we were forced to abandon the *fortín.* On the 14th we relinquished also Fortín Loa under the pressure of great Bolivian forces coming from Camacho. The advices sent to me by the Minister of War made known that in Camacho the Bolivians had assembled some thousands of men to operate on this side, that in Ballivián there were concentrated other regiments, and that large contingents of fresh Bolivian troops were pouring into the Chaco. In a few days the situation underwent a complete transformation. Other informations indicated that the enemy intended to launch some important action and that his preparations therefor were very much ahead. Consequently, on our part, it was necessary for us to take urgent means to place ourselves in good condition for the approaching events, particularly because among us the series of uninterrupted successes and the hope for a near peace based upon the negotiations initiated by the neighboring countries had lulled our spirit a little too much.[24]

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[24] When the efforts of the American mediators in Washington obviously had failed to stop the Chaco War, Argentina and Chile undertook to make a fresh attempt all by themselves. To that effect the ministers of foreign relations of the two countries, Dr. Carlos Saavedra Lamas of Argentina and Sr. Miguel Cruchaga Tocornal of Chile, met in the Argentine city of Mendoza in a conference in February 1 and 2, 1933, as a result of previous negotiations carried out with several weeks of anticipation. These negotiations were well known in Paraguay and elsewhere and had given rise to the hope that they might ultimately find a solution for the Chaco problem. Ministers Saavedra Lamas and Cruchaga Tocornal submitted to Paraguay and Bolivia a proposal, styled "the Mendoza formula," whose main points were the following three:

1) Arbitration of all and every one of the questions which may be raised in connection with the Chaco dispute so that a definitive solution thereof be secured;
2) Cessation of hostilities;
3) Withdrawal of the troops in such manner that the Bolivian army be concentrated in Ballivián and Roboré (see Map No. 1) and the Paraguayan army on the banks of the Paraguay River.

Paraguay and Bolivia, however, insisted on their own viewpoints, and the Mendoza formula came to nothing.

On December 19th we had in the entire sector only eighty-eight trucks in movement and seventy-one more immovable for lack of repairs. In the meantime the rains continued mercilessly. In the air we were blind—we could not count upon a single plane. But our people did not rest for a moment and devoted themselves to a stupendous effort of improvisation. Mobilization was intensified. New regiments and divisions were organized which, armed with rifles of all kinds, arrived in the Chaco daily. The shortage of officers was remedied by the supply of university students from all the schools and experienced noncommissioned officers. The Second Army Corps was organized and I was appointed commander of the two Army Corps.

Naturally the organization of these new units created also new demands. Not only was there a shortage of officers but they had absolutely no automatic arms. The troops were practically without instruction. All of which showed that the combative value of our new forces was very mediocre. Further, we were short of an infinity of material elements—radios, telephones, and tools of every description. But our determination to save the country was to operate as a miracle, and eventually we were to emerge from this ordeal with flying colors.

Part Two

THE DEFENSIVE

CHAPTER V

General Kundt—First Battle of Nanawa

By that time (about the beginning of December, 1932) there arrived in La Paz General Hans Kundt, engaged by the Bolivian government as a consequence of the first reverses suffered by Bolivia in the Chaco War. General Kundt, of German birth, enjoyed a great professional reputation, and he was received in Bolivia in the midst of a veritable apotheosis. In the streets of the Bolivian capital public manifestations of joy celebrated his arrival. Former organizer and Chief of the General Staff of the Bolivian army, his presence alone was sufficient to erase from the public spirit of the country the despondency induced by the hard experiences of the previous months, and all Bolivia offered to go to the battlefront. And when, in the course of a few days, General Kundt was appointed General in Chief of the army in the field, the Bolivian troops in the Chaco felt a spirit of revival. A current of optimism electrified the entire country.[25]

The sturdy personality of the German leader was not unknown to me. During my stay in Europe I studied in detail his record in the World War and the recognition he had merited from his immediate superiors, who presented him as a man who was exceedingly authoritative, self-confident, and tenacious, even to the point of stubborness. His energy and activity were phenomenal. He would lean for hours over his telephone, imparting orders and giving directions on all matters. Like Bismarck, General Kundt was fond of eating and drinking with Gargantuan exuberance. He left no room for initiative to his subordinates and thus he gave the impression of carrying his self-confidence to excess.[26]

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[25] In his message to the Bolivian congress of August 6, 1933, President Salamanca of Bolivia declared that General Kundt had been called to direct the campaign because Bolivia understood that "the national Command had failed in the Chaco." The Bolivian chiefs, said President Salamanca, were in a state of "semiciencia" *(half knowledge)*. Hence, it follows that General Kundt embodied the "ciencia" *(full knowledge)*. Such was the admiration that he commanded.—J.F.E.

[26] Col. David Toro, one of the most distinguished Bolivian chiefs in the Chaco War, wrote a letter to General Kundt on May 30, 1935, in which, among other things, he said: "On very rare occasions have you permitted yourself to listen to the well thought out and patriotic advices of your subordinates . . ." ". . . Your personal vanity was more powerful than anything that could have approximated you to the thoughts of your collaborators. . . ." Col. Toro said that General Kundt was dominated by "an infirm conviction of infallibility which was bound to lead you fatally to disaster."—J.F.E.

He was a fervent devotee of the offensive at all costs as an instrument of victory, according to his chiefs in the World War, and his favorite procedure consisted in attacking always and on all sides in rigid formations. In discharging his duty as General in Chief of the Bolivian army, he would confirm fully the foregoing opinions.

General Kundt belonged to that category of men who act with blind faith in their determinations and their deeds. As organizer of the Bolivian army and indisputable teacher of its corps of chiefs and officers, who felt for him a respect approaching veneration, and in placing himself at the head of an institution modeled strictly in line with his teachings, he was going to wield something which, in his judgment, was the best tool to be forged for the accomplishment of its ends and to occupy a position more enviable than that to which any commander in chief could aspire.

The military organization of Bolivia had been the exclusive work of General Kundt. It was not confined to the material sphere but it transcended the spiritual field. By exalting the warlike qualities of the Bolivian people, he inculcated in them the belief that their military capacity knew no bounds. The ruling classes of Bolivia, civil as well as military, reached, under the teachings of General Kundt, the conviction that the crushing of Paraguay was nothing more than a task of military training for the Bolivian troops and that they were, as a matter of fact, called upon to play a much worthier part than that of smashing a tiny country, and eventually they had to chastise also the mightier military powers of South America. Such a state of mind on the part of the Bolivians is reflected in innumerable documents. Their statesmen boasted and spoke without reserve of the necessity of submitting the Bolivian people, as a means of redemption, "to the proof of fire of war," according to the words of President Salamanca, who never ceased to encourage this aggressive spirit in his country. President Salamanca had the opportunity to convert these ideas into facts, to be the active vehicle of the doctrines diffused by General Kundt, and, fatefully, the war desired by one and by the other brought only grief and ruin upon both.

In view of the entire situation whose general aspects I have just outlined and it being for the moment little less than impossible to persist in the offensive—apart from the fact that the initial plan of the Paraguayan Command had already been accomplished, with mathematical exactitude—I gave the order on December 23, 1932, to pass momentarily to the defensive. That same day I left for Villa Militar, the place designated as the seat of my General Headquarters, with the object of organizing

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

A machine gun nest in the Pilcomayo sector.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Another Paraguayan machine gun nest. Notice the heavy quebracho logs used for cover. Quebracho is the hardest wood known and is produced only in the Chaco.

my new Command and supervising the establishment, organization, and equipment of the fronts to be defended. I constituted three principal defensive groups: *Toledo, Francia* (former Bolivian Fortín Arce) and *Nanawa.* With all dilligence we constructed defense works in Corrales, Herrera (former Bolivian Fortín Fernández), Zenteno (formerly named Alihuatá) and Kilometer-Seven-of-Saavedra (which the Bolivians called Campo Jordán) and in front of Samaklay, and advanced defensive points and points of cover for our principal centers.

Thanks to tireless efforts made by our transports in the full rainy season, we trained the troops and dug trenches on all sides. On all the fronts and in the rear guard, from the first officer to the last soldier, all vibrated unanimously with the unbreakable determination to deter and destroy the enemy.

The general pressure of the enemy was not delayed. On the 24th the combat raged hotly throughout the morning in Corrales. On the 27th the Bolivians pressed upon Herrera and attacked in the Saavedra and Nanawa regions, without serious results. On the 28th they continued their attacks in the Nanawa sector, where we lost the advanced post General Duarte. On the same day we stood off in Saavedra two furious attacks which left in our power a good number of arms.

Information from all sources made known to us important assemblies of enemy troops in Camacho, Platanillos, Saavedra, and Nanawa. But in view of the dire scarcity of means of transport (the permanent plight of the Paraguayan army in the course of all the war) and the continual rains, we had to authorize the Army Corps commanders to reduce to a minimum the garrisons of their advanced posts. The troops in general could not receive more than half of the daily ration. In Nanawa, in which region the roads were utterly impassable, they could not receive but some meat after December 1st. The problem of providing officers for the Second Army Corps persisted largely. In order to remedy this deficiency I requested Asunción to send naval officers who were fired with the patriotic desire of taking part at the front of operations; and they came full of alacrity and quickly adapted themselves to the new environment of combat which was offered to them.

As a consequence of the diminution of effectives ordered in the advanced posts there remained in Corrales some 300 men. On January 1, 1933, this *fortín* was attacked by several enemy regiments and, after an heroic defense lasting throughout the day, the *fortín* was abandoned and left in the power of the enemy at 6 P.M. The brave defenders of Corrales, when they received the order to retire, were totally surrounded and they had to open a passage through the enemy at the point of the bayonet to their bases, saving all their equipment.

It was evident that the late copious rains had made the enemy movements very difficult; in fact the enemy had accomplished no operation of importance since the Paraguayans had taken the defensive now sometime ago, and despite the better facilities they possessed for their supplies, as we shall see later.

At last, on January 7th, the Bolivians pressed with troops of real weight upon the Paraguayan advanced troops of Herrera obliging them to retire somewhat to the rear. On the following day they attacked with numerous troops our post Mariscal López and took it after its defenders had expended their munitions. Nevertheless, our troops retired in good order upon Nanawa. The defenders of Mariscal López were armed with rifles of caliber 7, different from the rest of the armament of our army, and they had at their disposal only a scant quantity of ammunitions which could not be replaced.

Immediately I gave the order to retake that post but I had to cancel it the following day in view of the movement of some Bolivian units on the side of Samaklay, a movement which was in accordance with the information that Nanawa would be attacked with strong forces.

Fully informed, above all by the declaration of prisoners, of the preparations on the part of the enemy of a serious attack upon Nanawa in the near future, I ordered, beginning January 11th, that some regiments be sent as reinforcements for the garrison of this *fortín*, and I further ordered the transportation of the necessary replacements for the existing units in that place. Prisoners captured in those days in the Corrales sector stated that in that sector few troops were left, since the greater part had been sent to the south. As a typical example of the form in which the Paraguayan Command was restrained from taking advantage of the favorable moments which presented themselves I record here an episode. Since January 10th we had assembled in Toledo a mass of five thousand men who absolutely became unmovable because of the lack of means of transport. If we had had at our disposal means in sufficient quantities, we should have been able to operate with incalculable results. The enemy did not have sufficient troops to check us, because, as we have seen, all their forces were concentrated towards the south for the attack upon Nanawa. Unfortunately we had knowingly to miss that precious opportunity, as well as others, always for the same cause—the meagerness of means of transport.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

A palm grove near Fortín Nanawa.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

A Paraguayan sentry post.

The first attacks of the enemy upon our advanced posts at Nanawa began effectively on January 15th, and by the 19th those advanced posts were obliged to fall back upon their principal positions. On the following day, the 20th, the enemy launched a general assault pressing especially from the north and from the south with the intention of surrounding us. General Kundt had put on his gauntlet of steel and was determined now to inflict upon us a smashing blow.

The assaulters numbered five thousand against two thousand five hundred of the Paraguayan defense. They threw themselves with impetuosity upon the Paraguayan parapets, where they were annihilated in a ferocious struggle by the bayonet. That day we repulsed all the assaults.

On the 21st the battle continued relentlessly, and that time the enemy succeeded in cutting the road from Nanawa to Gondra, at the fall of night. That same night I received a disagreeable surprise. The Commander of Nanawa informed me that he had munitions only for one day of combat. The convoy dispatched to carry munitions to Nanawa, some days before, did not arrive in time, and therefore our troops were likely to find themselves deprived of means of defense facing an enemy in murderous onslaught. With the cutting of the road by the enemy to the north of Nanawa it was impossible to receive supplies by the side of Falcón. The only method to which we could have recourse was that of aviation and in those days we had only two or three machines in course of repair in Asunción. We had however to make every effort to overcome the crisis, and thus I ordered that the said machines be sent in their present condition in order to carry munitions from Concepción. Moreover, in Nanawa there was no landing field and the commander of the *fortín* requested that the cases of munitions be thrown from the air. But we had had the experience that in each instance under such conditions we could not utilize more than twenty per cent of the projectiles dropped from a height of one thousand meters. I consequently ordered the rapid clearing of a landing field in a plain distant a few kilometers from Nanawa.

Fortunately, the attacks of the enemy became less intense, which permitted some economy in the munitions of our troops. On the 23rd, a day of bitter struggle, by the middle of the day, the emergency landing field was ready and three planes from Concepción and one from Villa Militar landed thereon with cargoes of projectiles. In this manner we were saved from this alarming contingency. When the first distribution was made, our men had no more than five cartridges each.

During the 21st and 22nd the Bolivians also attacked Herrera with fury and although with 1,500 men against 1,000, all the attacks were repulsed with great losses to the Bolivians.

In Nanawa, with the weakening of our fire, because of the above-noted shortage of munitions, the enemy succeeded partially in forcing back our extreme right, making there a dangerous dent, but the opportune intervention of a detachment launched from Falcón checked him in time. On that occasion the Commander of Nanawa, a little perturbed, requested authorization from me to evacuate the *fortín* with the object of taking up a position some kilometers behind, because of the menacing aspect of the enemy advance from the north and also somewhat from the south. I opposed that suggestion because I perceived that the impetus of the attacks was dwindling, after four days of bloody combat, and, further, because I took into account a factor of great psychological import at the moment. General Kundt, before letting loose the battle, had solemnly promised his troops and all Bolivia the immediate capture of Nanawa. It was the first significant success that he desired to obtain, in order to consolidate his messianic prestige with the Government of La Paz and before the Bolivian people, who had received him as a savior. With the fall of Nanawa the morale of all the Bolivians would have soared. The savior would have begun to operate his miracles, and the reborn enthusiasm would have increased. On the side of Paraguay, whose public opinion had been very much affected by the incident of the munitions, it would have produced, on the other hand, a resulting depression. For those reasons, however immaterial the importance of the place, I insisted upon persevering in its defense.

Because of the unbreakable firmness of the Paraguayan defense against the frontal attacks, on the morning of the 23rd the enemy started an outflanking maneuver by the north and also, in the afternoon, by the south, and succeeded in placing the defense of both our wings in a serious plight.

On the 24th an interesting event occurred. The enemy troops in their flanking swing to the south of Nanawa had to cross an open space in order to reach the Paraguayan positions, which covered the edge of a small wood. The previous night the Paraguayans had set up a simulated position in open field some one hundred meters ahead of their true position. They occupied its extension with a few soldiers hidden behind some bushes with the orders to open a heavy fire at the moment of the enemy advance. At dawn of that day, the 24th, without previous reconnaissances, without firing a shot, the Bolivians threw themselves into the assault. When they were about to reach the simulated position, in the moment of disorganization that in such cases is inevitable, and after some short volleys, a regiment of Paraguayan cavalry, on foot, flung themselves into the assault, machete in hand. After a brief melée the Bolivian regiment No. 41, under the command of Major Pantoja, was annihilated by blows of machetes. This Bolivian unit had arrived two days previously and had been thrown into the blaze without even a preliminary survey. The soldiers who formed part of this regiment were clothed in brand new uniforms with buttons of the United States Army. After that day the Paraguayans could also exhibit American uniforms, and very opportunely indeed, because the uniforms of our soldiers by that time were in a sorry condition.

The result of the above-described massacre was the utter paralysis of the enemy assaults. General Kundt, who had lost the battle upon which so many hopes were founded, consoled himself on that day by sending a report to La Paz in which he affirmed that Nanawa was surrounded. And for some months the Bolivian people continued to believe in the siege of that irreducible Paraguayan *fortín.*

The 25th found Nanawa quiet. The Paraguayans, after five days of conflict against a tenacious enemy much superior in number, were naturally fatigued. The local Command possessed no reserves and counterattacks accordingly were not possible.

The holocaust of the Bolivian troops in their vain frontal attacks upon Herrera continued in like manner.

In the subsequent days the Paraguayan people made a titanic effort, thanks to which we were able to assemble seven thousand men in Francia, five thousand in Toledo and the same number in Nanawa, with which, though they were badly equipped and poorly armed, we were in a condition to withstand all the onslaughts of General Kundt until they were terminated by his irreparable defeat. If we had had sufficient means of transport, we could have acted in a far more rapid and decisive manner.

On the 27th we destroyed the north wing of the enemy's enveloping movement on Nanawa and, consequently, for the moment we removed the danger from that side.

On the 28th in Herrera, where the enemy had embarked upon an enveloping movement, we repulsed the two wings of this evolution.

On January 29th, 30th and 31st the Bolivians resumed their frontal attacks upon Nanawa, disposing their troops in successive waves. With considerable sacrifices of life, on the last day, they managed to make some headway on the north wing, where they established some artillery emplacements and directed a fire of interdiction upon our Nanawa-Orihuela road.

Despite all those difficulties, on the 29th we made a demonstrative attack upon Corrales with troops detached from Toledo, which for some time had been unable to develop any activity. This sufficed to bring to an end all activity on the part of the Bolivians towards Herrera and compelled them to greater retreats. Evidently the sensitive point of the enemy front was there but we could do no more. Despite the good opportunities which these attacks offered we had to suspend them because in one of the battalions armed with the notorious *mata-paraguayo* rifles[27] there occurred many explosions in the magazines of the same which mutilated the soldiers.

With the new troops dispatched to Nanawa we organized the Third Army Corps by reinforcing the Fourth and Fifth Divisions, which were assembled on the said front of operations.

In the first days of February the constant influx of newly-mobilized men into our ranks continued, raising our forces to 8,200 men in Francia and to 5,700 in Toledo, but those men were for the most part without arms.

The new stage of the enemy offensive having been broken, and in view of the impossibility of executing any offensive movement on our part, we proceeded to a general reorganization of all our units and to undertake some local counterattacks in order to improve our line of defense as well as to effect rectifications on the fronts so as to place ourselves more in harmony with our real possibilities. For example, on February 8th I authorized the Commander of the Second Army Corps to retire his troops from Corrales towards Toledo, among other reasons being the failure of means of transport to supply water to these troops. Water had to be carried from a considerable distance.

In the following days of the month of February there occurred a series of local actions and *coups de main* by Paraguayans and Bolivians on all the fronts. The only noteworthy feature of this period was a persistent observation by the Bolivian aviation over the region west of Zenteno (Alihuatá) which we could not prevent because of our lack of planes.

Impotent, on our part, to observe the enemy from the air, we sent out patrols on foot toward the region of observation of the enemy, but this patrolling, slow and painful, made through woody territory by paths which the patrols had themselves to open, produced no result. Truly, we were working under very unequal conditions, the Bolivians in the air and the Paraguayans on foot.

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[27] Those rifles were ordered from Europe shortly before the war, and they proved to be of inferior quality. The soldiers gave them the name of *mata-paraguayos*, which means literally "killers of Paraguayans."—J.F.E.

CHAPTER VI

Toledo—Our Retirement From the Front of Saavedra

On February 26th the enemy, who followed up our retirement from Corrales, burst in a formidable attack upon Toledo. That day we repelled four furious onslaughts causing the enemy great losses. Those assaults upon Toledo coincided with others upon Nanawa, on our extreme wings, attacks which we also repulsed all along the line.

On the 27th, at dawn, the enemy resumed his assaults upon Toledo and that time he pushed more towards our left with the object of outflanking us, but those attacks were frustrated by our counterattacks.

The Bolivian attacks slowed down on the 28th and by March 1st they came to a full stop.

In the action of Toledo the enemy attempted some night attacks which failed badly. In view of the futility of his method of frontal attacks and the immaterial results which up to then he had obtained in his outflanking movements, which, based upon his superior numbers, could have promised something but whose effects were invariably annulled by Paraguayan counterattacks, it appeared that now the enemy Command intended to attack by night.

According to the declaration of prisoners, this latter procedure was due to the fact that, in Nanawa as in Herrera and in Toledo, the Indian soldiers, who made up practically the entire body of the Bolivian army, did not dare any longer to make frontal attacks, despite the energy displayed by the Command. Mainly in Nanawa and in Herrera our soldiers had observed that in their frontal drives the Bolivian troops whirled in great confusion behind the bushes instead of advancing; in these moments the Paraguayan mortars, taking immediate advantage of the situation, caused terrible slaughter among them. The Bolivian officers with cries and with pistol in hand endeavored to rouse them to the attack, but rarely could they re-establish any order.

In that period of the war there was evidenced among our subordinate chiefs a failing which was a consequence of their defective education for the command. That consisted in counting beforehand upon reserves other than their own, and of whose existence they were aware. Thus, as soon as any offensive or defensive action commenced, and even before its culmination, urgent requests for reinforcements were received not only for a part but for all the reserves that the immediate superior commander might have. During the battle of Toledo those requests were constant even to the extent of asking for the coming of units engaged in other sectors. To the subordinate commander the local action which he had in charge was everything, an exaggeration that nevertheless is a very human defect and attributes maximum importance to the action in which one is engaged.

After the enemy attacks were checked, the troops of Toledo suffered the unwelcome surprise of an epidemic of malaria, which spread rapidly and affected nearly all the units. Even so, however, on March 10th the Second Army Corps accomplished a movement against the enemy at its front; on the 11th it managed to intercept the road of the Bolivian rear guard, and on the 12th dispersed the enemy almost totally, taking prisoners and a heavy quantity of arms and munitions.

Notwithstanding the manifest numerical inferiority of the Bolivians who made the attack upon Toledo and the undeniable deficiency of the local Paraguayan Command, the epidemic and the scarcity of the means of transport did not permit the complete destruction of those enemy troops and did not render possible and effective any pursuit which the moment certainly counselled.

Meanwhile in the Zenteno-Saavedra region a situation full of interest developed. On March 11th, when we closed the road of the enemy rear guard at Toledo, a strong enemy force appeared in Alihuatá Viejo (Charata) at the dawn of day at some ten kilometers to the west of Fortín Alihuatá (Zenteno), pushing back violently the small garrison which we maintained in that place, and at 1 o'clock on the same day intercepted the Francia-Zenteno road at a point 15 kilometers more or less from Francia. The First Division, which occupied Kilometer-Seven-of-Saavedra, and the defenders of Zenteno, were cut off from their base on their principal road, and they could rely only upon the path which connected the Zenteno-Saavedra road with Gondra. From the first moment it appeared to me that the situation was excellent. We were presented with the opportunity of destroying that thousand enemy troops of incursion who came to fall in the middle of our forces. I imparted pertinent orders to the Command of the First Army Corps located in Francia, upon whom the isolated troops of Zenteno and Kilometer-Seven-of-Saavedra depended. I likewise ordered that the troops of the garrison of Falcón, a regiment from Herrera and another from Nanawa were to be transported to Francia and placed at the disposition of the First Army Corps, and that the garrison of Gondra unite with the First Division, marching by the path whose widening for the

(*Benjamín Banks' collection*)

A Paraguayan Red Cross transport carrying the wounded and the sick to the rear.

(*Benjamín Banks' collection*)

Sheep raised in the Chaco. In the background, a passenger boat on the Paraguay River.

passage of trucks I ordered also. The defenders of Zenteno, who depended upon the First Army Corps, were transferred to the Command of the First Division in order to enable that division to co-ordinate the action of the troops from that side.

I likewise gave the necessary orders to assure that supplies from Gondra should reach the defenders of Kilometer-Seven and of Zenteno. Those, both munitions and victuals for the troops, were immediately transported on the backs of the soldiers.

But a message in Guaraní language[28] from the Commander of the First Division in which he advised me that he had lost the code, produced upon me a disappointing impression. It revealed to me that the state of nervousness prevailing in the great unit was unsatisfactory.

The same Command reported forthwith that Zenteno, defended by 250 men, was attacked by 1,400 Bolivians and that the First Division was fighting fiercely against two enemy divisions, and he requested authorization to detach himself from the enemy by night and retire upon Zenteno.

Insisting upon my intentions to destroy the enemy troops of incursion, I ordered the First Division to maintain for some days more its present positions. I reasoned further that a retreat upon Zenteno would very much facilitate the task of the enemy because of the dangerous condition which would surround such retreat. In any case the retreat would have to be towards Gondra so as not to neglect Nanawa because otherwise Nanawa would, to a certain extent, be left isolated and probably with insufficient effectives for the eventualities which might present themselves later.

Commencing with the following day, March 12th, we started our attack on the side of Francia, with 1,000 men. We were able to make little headway since a torrential rain rendered our movement extremely difficult.

The interchange of messages in Guaraní alarmed all Asunción. The General in Chief made known to me from Asunción his anxiety for the safety of the First Division. The Bolivian defeat at Toledo caused a Bolivian retreat from Herrera and the enemy Command surely thought that we should logically exploit our victory on this front. But, as explained above, we were in no condition to take a single step because of the failure of means of mobility.

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[28] The language of Paraguay is bilingual, Spanish and Guaraní. Guaraní is a native Indian language which all Paraguayans understand and it is unknown to the Bolivians.—J.F.E.

On the 14th we recommenced our attacks towards Zenteno, but at 1:30 P.M. on that day the First Division reported that it was all surrounded by two divisions and three regiments of enemy cavalry. Adjusting my calculations of the time necessary to destroy the enemy units of incursion and taking into account the resources of munitions and victuals which had been stored up in the front of Kilometer-Seven-of-Saavedra, I ordered the First Division, in a dispatch, to resist until the 19th of the month. In successive dispatches the First Division reported to me that it had swept the enemy from the road to Zenteno and had dispersed a Bolivian regiment in the woods. In view of the fact that the situation in Kilometer-Seven had improved, on the 15th I ordered the First Division to remain in its post seven days more and, at the request of its Commander, I sent an additional battalion from the side of Gondra. The assembly of troops coming from the side of Herrera and Nanawa continued with all rapidity. But on the 16th, towards the middle of the day, the Commander of the First Division, evidently much dispirited, intimated that the enemy had returned and surrounded him. This intimation along with other unfavorable impressions of the spirit prevailing in the First Division led me to admit that probably I had imposed upon that great unit a task too heavy to be accomplished in its present irresolute condition. In consequence, I authorized its Commander to detach it from its position and retire to Gondra by the trail which, by this time, could be traversed by trucks. I ordered the defenders of Zenteno to combine with our troops who were attacking upon the Francia-Zenteno road, and this they did with all their equipment without much difficulty. In that manner the opportunity of destroying by parts the enemy troops in the Zenteno-Saavedra region was missed, an event the more regrettable because it coincided with the moment of the greatest potentiality of the Paraguayan army since the beginning of the campaign. At that period it would not have taken much time for us to have 22,000 men at the front, of whom some 10,000 were in the Francia region.

The retirement of the First Division was accomplished with remarkable mastery on the night of the 17th after it had transported all its equipment. It was only in the afternoon of the following day that the enemy took cognizance of that retirement.

Public opinion in our capital city by reason of these developments was very unfavorable to the Command in the Chaco. On the 18th the War Minister asked in a very bad humor, in a dispatch, what I intended to do now. He apparently believed that all was lost. Flattered by uninterrupted victories, the Paraguayan people, we may say, were spoiled, and no sooner had the Commander in Chief been compelled to rectify his dispositions—a fact which, by the way, he had anticipated—than a current of pessimism overflowed everybody.

On the same day, the 18th, the President wrote me the letter which I transcribe fully to show that even such a man of imperturbable coolness and sound judgment as Dr. Ayala could not elude the depressing trend which prevailed in the general public.

Asunción, March 18, 1933.

Strictly Confidential

My dear Colonel:

I desire to make you acquainted with the financial and diplomatic situation.

Despite the efforts displayed, the negotiations of the neighbors, ABCP [Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Perú] have practically failed. Bolivia opposes any agreement because she is confident of the success of her offensive and that ultimately she will dominate the Chaco. For my part I do not believe that we can obtain peace by these means unless some military disaster should overcome her or some internal disturbance should shake her. All this is improbable. Consequently, we must count upon the continuation of the war.

The resources of the Government are very limited. The gold reserves are already spent. There remains a small balance which we must preserve in order to provide munitions, means of transport, and the things which are absolutely indispensable. Already we are not in any position to acquire rifles, airplanes, artillery, and machine guns.

The plan of the Command must be, therefore, subordinated to those circumstances because they are irremediable. Some *inland financiers* dream of methods of which the least we can say is that they are ridiculous. Paraguay is poor, deprived of metals and of assets which might be transformed at once into metals. Against this there is no available expedient.

I understand that you cannot maintain your present positions without further contingents and more equipment. It is then a case of combining upon a strictly defensive plan whereby we have full security for detaining the enemy for some months and causing him considerable losses. Bolivia will have to attack continually and waste her forces more rapidly and in a greater proportion than ourselves. According to calculations, Bolivia may resist economically for three months more, at the most. As a consequence we must be prepared to resist for that time *with the means at present at our disposal.* Munitions must be economized, arms preserved with extreme care and employed only in cases of real necessity. Our planes must be entrusted only with missions which are without danger. The loss of one airplane would cause a terrible impression on this nervous population, which is already sensitive to panic.

In order to develop the new plan we shall have to take into account, above all, the lines of transport which we shall have to serve. I hope that you will give the necessary instructions, accordingly.

I have the belief that a line strongly defensible where there can be no possible surprises such as that of Alihuatá would impress the enemy more than our present lines, which are exposed, as we have just seen, to *coups de main.*

Between Bolivia and Paraguay there is an essential difference. In Bolivia there does not exist any public opinion; their disasters are not known; there prevails a system of terror that prevents comment and the Bolivians absolutely do not know what passes in the Chaco. Thus it is that the terrific losses which they have suffered have not caused any discomfort to the Government. Further, the iron hand of Salamanca has silenced all those who would comment upon our successes.

On the other hand, among us, liberty reigns, and the people pass from enthusiasm to depression according to the information from the front. The generals criticize, despite my warning, the Command. I have just received a letter from General Escobar which I am going to answer, and afterwards I shall send to you a copy in order that you may see the bad spirit of those gentlemen. What can be done against such action? As a matter of fact anything that we may do is likely to impair things. In any case you can be assured that my personal and official authority will be on your side in good and, above all, in bad conditions. Not for a single moment have I believed in any intrigue to displace you, and notwithstanding my firm and resolute attitude, they are always furtively watching for some mishap to attain their ends. Therefore our tactics must be such as to evade any fortuitous operation and to be always sure even if we advance little or not at all.

With the expressions of, &c., &c.,

Eusebio Ayala.

My reply to the foregoing letter follows:

P.C., March 20, 1933.
Dr. Eusebio Ayala,
President of the Republic.
My dear Mr. President:

I have received you interesting letter of the 18th inst., sent to me by hydroplane, and I have carefully made myself acquainted with its contents.

I think I can deduce from its contents that the impression in the Capital arising from the enemy incursion upon Alihuatá has been very strong, without there being sufficient reason for it. That event was nothing more than a fluctuation entirely normal in war and, happily, without any great importance, since it did not cost the life of a single man, the loss of a single rifle nor of any equipment, apart from ceding to the enemy a narrow stretch of territory in the desert.

Reflecting calmly and knowing that the final aim of a war is the destruction of the enemy forces and not geographical objectives, no matter how important they may be, and in view of the fact that the enemy did not succeed in capturing or killing a single Paraguayan soldier, the enemy plan, it can be affirmed, has failed in its essential part, and he has suffered, on the other hand, considerable losses in men and even in arms.

From the day that, in the middle of January, you were kind enough to grant me the interview at Kilometer 145 I have endeavored to adapt the operations of our troops to the true situation of the country which you have just confirmed in your letter. Thus, we have adopted a defensive attitude which certainly has given us resounding successes over the enemy troops. In Nanawa we have killed at least one thousand enemy soldiers; in Saavedra no fewer than five hundred; the same in Herrera, and finally, in Toledo, another thousand. The enemy wounded can be counted in thousands. All this at a cost to us of nothing more than one of our unimportant posts and some three hundred casualties, including dead, wounded, and missing.

We cannot assert that it is impossible to maintain our present positions. All will depend upon the proportion of the enemy effort. By now we have made ourselves strong in Toledo, Francia, and Nanawa, at which points we believe we can detain for a sufficient time the enemy advance despite the fact, as I expressed in one of my recent cyphered messages to the Ministry of

War, that our line of communications directly from Nanawa to Falcón was somewhat exposed.

The dilemma is inescapable. We have an extensive front to cover with a number of troops insufficient to be strong everywhere. On the other hand the resources of the country, as you have just told me, do not allow more.

In this difficult situation two factors are fundamental to the direction of our operations:

(1) To be informed, as amply as possible, of the situation of the enemy, of his intentions and his conduct, and

(2) To have at hand sufficient elements of transport for the rapid movement of the strategic reserves and even for the correct application of the principle of economy of forces. For (1) aviation and cavalry; for (2) trucks.

I ask you to be undisturbed—we will observe, and do observe strictly, all your recommendations referring to economy in munitions, care of arms, employment of aviation, *et cetera*.

As to the line of supply I have suggested already, in a previous code telegram to the Minister of War, the necessity of hastening the organization of the transports from Concepción and Puerto Pinasco with a view of supplying exclusively by this line the troops of Nanawa in anticipation of the possibility that the communications direct from Francia to Nanawa might be interrupted.

Concerning the character of the operations themselves I have always in view your recommendations and, as always, with the least sacrifice we shall try to inflict upon the enemy the greatest damage.

Taking into account the impossibility of increasing our fighting effectives because of the lack of arms, it will be indispensable to take all the necessary measures in order to preserve without change the present numbers, that is, with an intense preparation of our reserves in men to provide in the best way possible the replacement of our casualties.

In order to keep you informed of the military situation in all its aspects, my Chief of General Staff, Lt. Col. Garay, is making a trip to Asunción.

Please accept the assurances of my highest respect.

Sgd.: Col. Estigarribia.

On the 21st the enemy returned to make contact with the advanced posts of the First Division upon the road to Gondra.

The reigning spirit among the population behind the lines flowed also over the front of operations and some chiefs requested from me authorization to abandon Herrera and Gondra. My reply to those suggestions was an order to defend steadfastly both positions. Herrera covered our principal artery Francia-Boquerón, and Gondra that of Falcón-Nanawa and, to some degree, that of Nanawa-Orihuela.

In the days immediately following, because of the heavy rains and with the exception of some more or less important skirmishes around Gondra, relative calm prevailed on all fronts.

On the 26th an enemy troop infiltrated the Francia-Herrera road but they were dislodged during the day. On the 29th, in Herrera, 900 Paraguayans repulsed a strong Bolivian attack of 1,800 men, who left behind 100 dead. In Gondra the skirmishes continued until the end of the month.

Undoubtedly, in the general outline of our positions Herrera and Gondra were the points more exposed, but we were obliged to defend both because they established the cover on our roads from Francia to Villa Militar, and from Nanawa to Orihuela. By abandoning Herrera and Gondra the enemy would probably have compelled us to give up Francia also in a short time (our principal source of water) and Nanawa; and this could not possibly be admitted except in a case of extremity. Consequently we defended doggedly both positions.

In the latter days of March I was deluged, if I may say so, with important news from Asunción. I was informed that the next objective of the enemy would be Francia; that General Kundt intended to attack Nanawa; that the new offensive would be undertaken with 17,000 men; that Nanawa would be put aside by the enemy who would proceed to Concepción, and so forth.

On April 2nd at twilight we stood off a furious assault on Herrera, and another one at 11 P.M. At the dawn of the 3rd we counterattacked with success.

On April 7th an enemy troop cut the road from Nanawa at a point 20 kilometers from Falcón. Everything necessary was done to clear the road.

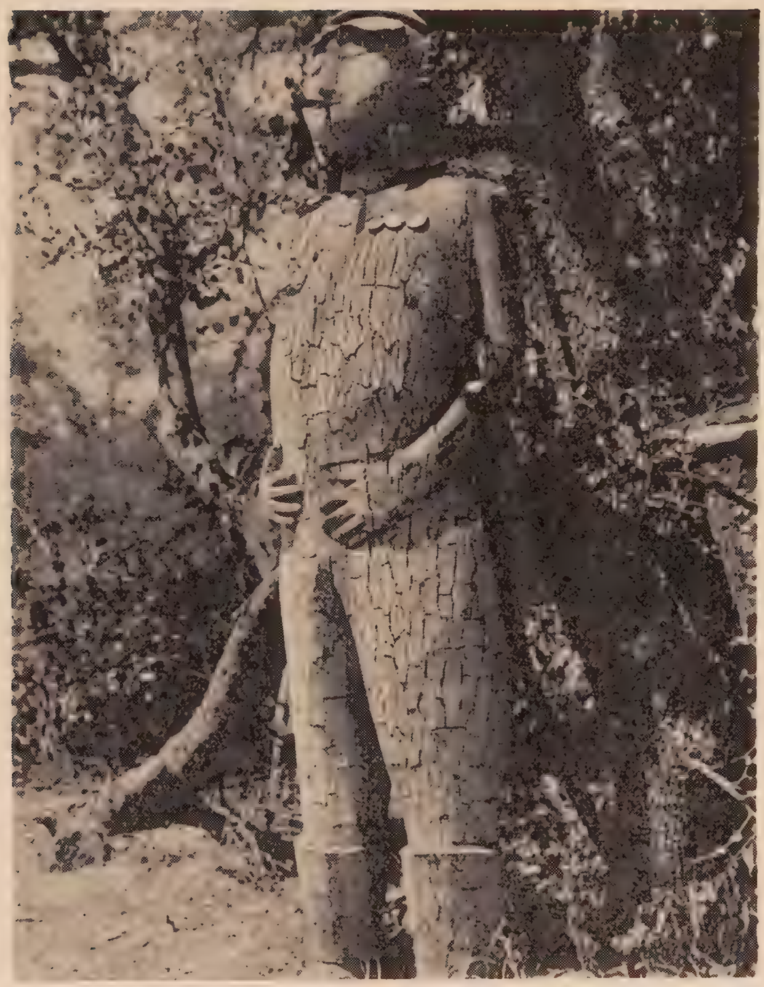
On the 8th the Commands of the Army Corps concerned again proposed to me the abandonment of Herrera, Falcón, and Gondra, but I opposed with firmness those propositions. The Commander of Nanawa then declared that his situation was difficult because of the interception of the road to Falcón. On the same day we repulsed strong attacks on Gondra and made progress in Herrera.

On the 9th the enemy reinforced the troops which had cut the Falcón-Nanawa road and attacked in the direction of Falcón.

The day following we compelled the Bolivians to abandon this road. In those days and in anticipation of the possible repetition of those enemy raids upon our road to Nanawa and with the object also of preserving the lateral contact with that point, I ordered the opening of two new roads: one from Falcón to Figari and the other from Villa Militar to a place known as Mister Kent. From Figari and from Mister Kent roads existed to Nanawa.

On the 13th enemy troops appeared again upon the Falcón-Nanawa road, which being cleared by the 16th we continued our pursuit as far as five kilometers to the west in Campo Aceval, where we found a line of positions. In this place a new front was constituted.

For the rest of the month local actions of variable importance occurred. In the Herrera sector we went as far as Kilometer 55 towards Platanillos.



(Benjamín Banks' collection)

A display of good humor in the front. Caricature of General Hans Kundt, the Bolivian Commander in Chief, carved by an improvised artist in the Chaco.

In the meanwhile the indications of a forthcoming attack of major proportion upon Nanawa took shape.

On May 1st we perceived a general activity of the enemy in almost all sectors, especially in Platanillos, Zenteno, Campo Aceval, Gondra, and Pirizal. The prisoners taken in those localities informed us of the impending general Bolivian offensive. Those local conflicts lasted throughout the first half of May in all sectors. On the 19th we repulsed four strong frontal attacks in the Herrera sector. On the 20th, at 15 kilometers from Francia in the direction of Herrera, an enemy troop appeared upon our road, which road was cleared again on the 22nd.

In Herrera we repulsed sanguinarily seven fresh assaults on the 21st and we verified that the Bolivian dead amounted to one thousand. Some persistent rains and a new epidemic of malaria impeded in those days the carrying out of various local actions which we had prepared in different sectors.

During all the month of June the rains continued, which was very unusual in the Chaco since the rainy season should be practically over by March; and because of this and a new epidemic of malaria we confined our activities to repelling local attacks and covering new fronts which the increased forces of the enemy had formed, such as Pampa Grande, Pozo Favorita, Campo Aceval, El Zanjón, Pirizal, *et cetera.*

Our information during that month of June enabled me to see that the enemy had moved the center of gravity of his troops towards the south. That obliged me to take the corresponding countermeasures; so, in the face of all difficulties, I assembled in Nanawa 9,000 men and at the same time I threw the weight of our strategic reserve towards Falcón.

It is worth explaining at this point the reason why the bad weather, which was exceptional throughout 1933, did not hinder the constant offensive action of the Bolivians, except for very short periods of interruption. On May 10, 1933, the Government of Paraguay declared the country in state of war with Bolivia in order to be in condition to request, particularly from the neighboring countries, the strict observance of the rules of neutrality. I understand that at that time pertinent representations to the governments of Argentina and Brazil were made, through whose territories the Bolivian army was supplied. But, be that as it may, the truth is, that Bolivia, despite the declaration of war, continued to supply her army through the territories of those neighboring countries, from Formosa (Argentina) on the south, and from Corumbá (Brazil) by the north.

In that manner, Bolivia always had a substantial advantage over Paraguay. While we were compelled to transport our supplies by our own means over a distance of no fewer than 1,000 kilometers, the Bolivians, on the other hand, could transport provisions for their principal army from Esteros and from Linares, over the Pilcomayo River, and thus they covered with their own means only some scores of kilometers, nothing more than the distance from the boundary line necessary to distribute the supplies to the troops. In other words, the wholesale transportation, which is the most difficult, was made for Bolivia in foreign territory, and she had only the easiest part of the task, merely that of distributing in retail to her troops in the field. The Argentines delivered victuals to them at the two above-mentioned points, and the Brazilians did the same in Puerto Suárez. Experts in logistics know well the importance represented by the aid of these facilities. Thus is explained the reason for the Bolivian possibilities of permanently feeding their offensive actions. We were aware that Bolivian soldiers in civilian attire crossed to Argentine territory in order to assist the purveyors to make the transport to the Chaco.

Towards the end of June we took some Bolivian prisoners through whom we learned that General Kundt was preparing a powerful attack upon Nanawa, with 20,000 men provided with tanks, flame throwers, and heavy artillery; and further that the Bolivians were digging mines. General Kundt, according to the prisoners, was bringing troops from all other sectors to Nanawa and that confirmed our impression that the Bolivians were weakening their forces to a considerable extent along the front.

We also contemplated in those days the possibility of an important offensive action whose definite lines had not yet been drawn. With this object we were training our troops of recent formation, in local enterprises, in order to inure them to warfare. We had remained upon the defensive for some months and it is well known that this attitude tends to cramp the initiative and the activity of the soldier. This also was the reason that we transferred our effectives towards the south so that an enemy action in the Nanawa region should not take us by surprise. Naturally, with the experience which we had gathered in the Nanawa battle of January last we adopted special precautions to counteract the enemy action which was announced. Accordingly on July 1st I sent particular instructions to the Commander of the Third Army Corps in Nanawa which foreshadowed the action of the enemy as well as our possible offensive.

CHAPTER VII

The Second Battle of Nanawa

On July 2nd our outposts at Nanawa reported that they had heard the characteristic rumblings of the enemy tanks, which were taking positions. As we did not have the special weapons to oppose those tanks, we emplaced pieces of artillery of calibre 75 in order to check them by direct shots. On the same day the enemy took by assault a small Paraguayan sentry post in Gondra but failed in other similar attempts in the same sector.

On the 3rd, silence reigned in Nanawa and in Gondra. On the 4th, after an intense preparation by artillery, which lasted one hour, the Bolivians exploded a ponderous mine which they had placed in the immediate proximity of one of our advanced redoubts in Nanawa, and without loss of time, with 15,000 men, they launched themselves into the assault and advanced resolutely through the breach opened by their mine.

This advance was preceded by a rolling barrage and a protective fire well adjusted. Numerous enemy planes, in low flight, dropped powerful bombs and fired their machine guns, with the result that, in the first moment, a complete severance was made between our advanced positions and those of the rear.

The enemy flame throwers licked with their tongues of fire everything in their way. Immediately behind them the tanks moved, making use of their arms. But the Paraguayan local reserves who, in the midst of this infernal storm, had rushed to the broken part of the line fought hand to hand in a frightful melée until they arrested the enemy advance. Then they threw themselves upon the enemy in a furious counterattack with hand grenades and, by the close of day, they retook one of the two redoubts which had fallen into the hands of the Bolivians. One of the tanks was set on fire by the shots of our artillery, and the remainder were rendered immovable.

In Gondra and in Zenteno all the enemy assaults were repulsed, causing them great losses.

Between 2 and 3 A.M. on the following day, July 5th, the Paraguayans managed in their counterattack to surround the occupants of the other lost redoubt, and in a vigorous assault they retook it, employing almost exclusively hand grenades. As a result of this titanic struggle which lasted throughout the whole of the day, the Paraguayans were able totally to re-establish their line.

On the 6th, at 5:30 A.M., the Bolivians returned to the assault, but by 9:30 A.M. they were all repulsed. At 3 P.M. another assault was also repulsed, and at 8 P.M. we repelled the most violent assault of the day.

In Gondra, on the same day, a powerful attack was repelled.

By the 7th calm reigned once more over Nanawa.

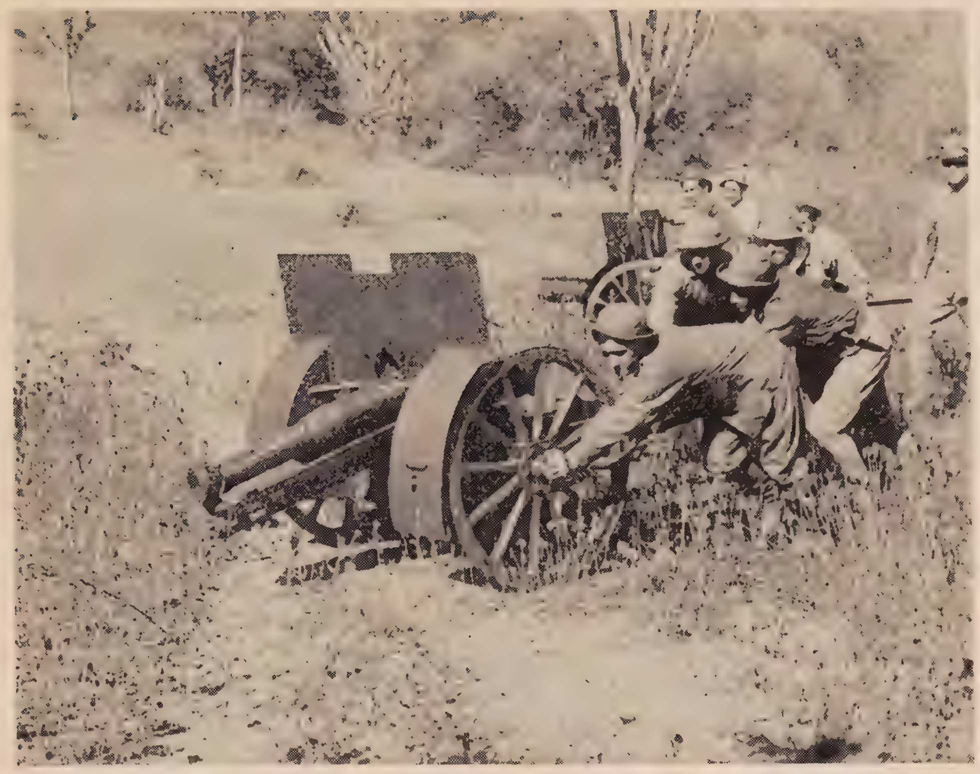
On the 11th we launched our counterattack in the Gondra sector and took the whole of the first enemy line. In the afternoon the Bolivians reacted, counterattacking us in their turn, but unsuccessfully, upon the position which we had seized from them and leaving on the field six hundred dead.

On the 12th one of our maneuvering columns in the Gondra sector fell upon the road of the rear guard of the enemy's Fourth Division and captured their hospitals and supply stations. The same day we frustrated in Nanawa an enemy attack by tanks before it materialized.

On the 14th the Bolivian Fourth Division, which defended the Gondra sector, barely escaped an encircling movement of our troops and left in our power all their equipment.

On the same day, the 14th, I personally inspected the Nanawa battlefield. I was a witness on that occasion of the most gruesome spectacle that I can recall in my life. In all that sector where the Bolivians had broken our lines and made their deepest penetration into our defensive system, fragments of legs and arms severed by the artillery were yet hanging from the trees. In one place there had fallen in an embrace a Paraguayan soldier and a Bolivian, and it could be seen that they had fought furiously hand to hand until the hand grenades which the Paraguayan had carried in his pocket, exploded, killing the two. This was evident from the fact that the thigh of the Paraguayan was splintered by the explosion on the side where he had the pocketful of explosives. What followed was even worse. As the field was littered with dead bodies, they had to be disposed of by incineration. Instead of placing wood among the corpses in order to feed the fire until their complete consumption was attained, they were simply piled and sprinkled with kerosene, thus setting fire to the whole. As long as there was kerosene the fire was maintained, but when this combustible was exhausted there remained a horrible heap of scorched human flesh which spread an unsupportable stench over the field. For months this atrocious sight remained in my eyes.

While inspecting another sector of the battlefield where Bolivian corpses still remained upon the ground, I observed the curious fact that each corpse invariably had at its side a Paraguayan rifle.



(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Light Paraguayan artillery taking position.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Another Paraguayan artillery group getting ready for an attack.

On requesting an explanation of this fact, which appeared to be anomalous, I was informed that whenever an advance took place each of our soldiers sought anxiously some Bolivian corpse in order to take from it the rifle and leave the Paraguayan rifle in its place. The Bolivian rifles were, as a general rule, brand new, while those of the Paraguayans were worn out because of overuse and the impossibility of opportunely replacing or repairing them.

The prisoners declared that the enemy losses amounted to 1,000 dead and 3,000 wounded. We gathered in Nanawa and in Gondra a huge amount of matériel abandoned by the enemy.

At the termination of the Nanawa battle I addressed to the combatants the following proclamation:

> To the chiefs, officers and defending soldiers of Nanawa and Gondra:
>
> During the battle of the past few days you have given new proofs of your ardent patriotism, of your invincible bravery and of how great is your decision to remain faithful to our motto: *Victory or death.*
>
> You have likewise warned Bolivia that her stubborness in attempting to conquer the Paraguayan Chaco by the force of arms, is fruitless, and you have proved to all the world, whose moral forces accompany you, with what unbreakable might the Army of Paraguay is fighting in defense of right and justice, which is the cause of all civilized peoples.
>
> With the overwhelming victory that you have just won against the numerical superiority and the better equipment of the invader, you have written one of the most brilliant chapters of our history which our people will know how to prize and which future generations will record with pride and with honor.
>
> You have well earned the gratitude of your country and the congratulations of your Commander in Chief.
>
> Colonel Estigarribia.

Before going further let us make some comments upon the endeavor of General Kundt to capture Nanawa. He was obsessed with the idea of taking that position. To those who were not acquainted with the terrain and based their calculations upon a cursory glance at the map, the direction of Nanawa-Concepción appeared from the Bolivian side the appropriate route for undertaking any major operation capable of isolating at a single stroke the Paraguayan army. General Kundt fell into this error. The attempt to reach Concepción was impracticable in the conditions which surrounded the Bolivian army. In the first place, the invader would have to cross a vast area, either totally flooded or with an absolute absence of fresh water. Besides, he would have to leave on his flank the whole of a considerable mass of our army which would cut him off from his base and cause him to perish in a very short time. General Kundt did not possess sufficient equipment to make the march to Concepción and at the same time annul any action of our army on the rest of the front of the Casado sector. Naturally, our duty, from the Paraguayan point of view, was to impede the enemy Commander from successfully starting the execution of his designs; consequently our first tenacious resistance of the month of January in Nanawa. General Kundt refused to accept that setback and carried out his second attempt in July, that time with preparations more carefully made but also with a result far more demoralizing for his troops and for him. The second defeat of Nanawa seriously affected the prestige of General Kundt. It was in fact the commencement of his decline, but, above all, materially it undermined the morale of the Bolivian soldier. In order possibly to palliate the failure of General Kundt, from this time the legend circulated that the fault rested in the Bolivian soldier, which was completely false. The Bolivian soldier fought courageously but he could not accomplish the impossible. And the impossible was what General Kundt had exacted from him in his frontal attacks against the strong Paraguayan parapets.

In his letter of March 18th concerning the rectification of our line in Zenteno and in Saavedra the President had enjoined me to give the operations an essentially defensive character. From that time the President maintained this attitude on all occasions. Thus there came about a real intervention on the part of the Chief Magistrate in the technical direction of operations, which run contrary to good practice. In fact, this policy of letting things take their course was by no means a safeguard against all risks; quite the contrary. Our passivity in front of an enemy in constant activity endangered our safety. It might also indefinitely prolong a struggle which eventually would exhaust us and prevent us from taking advantage of those opportunities which may present themselves favorably to us for bringing the war to a speedy close. Therefore in my instructions to the troops I did not lose sight of the possibility of passing to the offensive in order not to lessen their fighting élan, and further I thought continually about the best method of renewing the offensive when the opportune time arrived, notwithstanding the inflexible instructions of the President.

The adherence of the President to a defensive plan was, fundamentally, the result of his faith, which he never forsook, in the diplomatic efforts which were tried time and again in the course of all the war and which he thought should bring about a speedy peace. As a man of law he could not rid himself of his confidence in juridical expedients. He probably conjectured that peace might be secured unexpectedly, sooner than we imagined, and he desired that the advent of peace should not find the country exhausted as a consequence of an extremely costly offensive endeavor. But

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

A cemetery in the Saavedra front.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Mass in the Chaco. The officiating priest is Father Ernesto Pérez, military chaplain.

this consideration, perfectly explicable and justifiable in him, when applied to the military domain might create serious difficulties in the conduct of operations, and it embarrassed me in my position as the person directly accountable for them.

When I ended my visit to the Nanawa battlefield and after my personal intervention in the counterattack in the Gondra sector, where I employed a large part of our general reserves, I returned to my Headquarters on July 15th. There I found another letter from the President in which he again insisted upon the necessity of maintaining a strictly defensive attitude. He cited especially reasons of a diplomatic nature. "Under these conditions," he said to me, "there is no justification for the sacrifice of lives nor of any material."

On the 16th the exploitation of the success obtained in Gondra continued under good conditions, and our troops advanced to within 14 kilometers of the west of the *fortín,* that is, we were nearly six kilometers from the road from Zenteno to Saavedra.

As was natural, the enemy strained himself in every way to check us and accumulated troops brought from other neighboring sectors which obliged us, on our side, to employ more effectives, that is, to exert ourselves to the utmost in order to advance further. But those were the very efforts that had been ruled out by the President.

In that manner I was constrained to delay our advance in the Gondra region and I gave instructions accordingly. The salient which we had made in the defensive system of the enemy was very good for an offensive front, in case we had to continue the offensive as was my original intention, but, in passing to the defensive, the local situation became untenable. To remain in such a position was to expose ourselves to attacks from various sides and perhaps to be surrounded. Moreover, we had employed in the operation almost all of our general reserve brought from Falcón, which *fortín* was now left with little or no garrison. We were compelled therefore to reconstitute that reserve and again to garrison Falcón, in expectation of any events which might occur. On July 21st I gave the pertinent directives, and from that day the advantage which we had obtained in our counterattack in the Gondra region was wholly nullified, and we had to think also of the rectification of our line on this front.

Despite the persistent intervention of the President which forced me to maintain a defensive attitude, I did not give up for one moment my intention of returning to the offensive, because by that time we had already drawn from the defensive all the gain that we could hope from it. Again, the units of recent formation had improved sufficiently in organization and combativity.

While seeking to get the necessary authorization I devoted myself to the preparation of local counterattacks and to a study of the possibility of a concentration in the Francia sector for a decisive operation. The relative calm following the battles of Nanawa and Gondra lasted up to the end of July and was beneficial to us since it enabled us to renew our supplies. We reoccupied Falcón; we reorganized our general reserve; we selected successive positions for retreat in Gondra, and so forth.

Among the documents which, in the action of Gondra, had fallen into our hands, were some instructions of the enemy Command recommending to the units the constitution of special groups of crack troops which should be employed in incursions upon our roads, which indicated that the enemy would persist in the method of infiltrating our connecting roads. Prisoners captured some days afterwards declared that these orders for infiltration had already been given with regard to a number of our lines of communication.

On August 1st the enemy pressed strongly on all the Gondra front, especially upon El Zanjón. On the 2nd the pressure continued and increased. We dispersed an enemy patrol which had appeared behind our positions of Pozo Favorita. On the same day the Bolivians attacked in the Toledo sector and actively patrolled the region northwest of Gondra.

On the 3rd the fight raged doggedly in Gondra, where the enemy inaugurated a flanking movement on our right wing. The battle continued also in Pirizal and Herrera.

On the morning of the 4th enemy troops appeared upon our roads between Falcón and Rancho Ocho and between Gondra and Pirizal, interrupting our communications between those points and isolating the defenders of Gondra. Numerous patrols fought in all the sectors of our three Army Corps.

On the 5th the Bolivians made a surprise attack upon Falcón from the south side but were rolled back with great losses. We dispersed the enemy regiment No. 36, which left behind their wounded and equipment. At 9 A.M. on this day we cleared the road between Pirizal and Gondra. The combat continued stubbornly in those two latter positions as well as in Herrera and in Toledo. On the same day other enemy patrols emerged upon our Francia-Herrera road.

On the 6th the Bolivians threw a new attack upon Falcón with regiments Nos. 1, 18 and 36, this latter regiment reorganized. Again we repulsed them and inflicted upon them many losses. In Toledo, Herrera, Gondra, Pirizal, and Nanawa the struggle continued fiercely. On the 7th the enemy regiments which attacked

Falcón retreated towards Zenteno, and we accelerated the clearing of the road to Rancho Ocho. The enemy retreated also from Pirizal after suffering substantial losses.

On the 8th and 9th we repulsed strong attacks upon Gondra, and on the 10th we re-established the Falcón-Rancho Ocho road. So the new attempts of the enemy totally collapsed, but the danger was not much averted—we were always crippled because of our defensive position.

Some days of relative calm followed. Then fights occurred between patrols on all the fronts with some local attacks and counterattacks of little consequence. The 23rd of August dawned upon great Bolivian activity in nearly all sectors. The enemy succeeded once more in appearing upon our roads in Kilometer 25 to the south of Falcón and in Kilometer 4 to the north of Rancho Ocho as well as in Kilometer 12 between Falcón and Zotti (Tejerina). This time we detected greater enemy effectives on all sides, especially near Rancho Ocho, a point particularly sensitive in our system because from there a road ran eastward crossing our communication in the rear of Nanawa towards Orihuela-Concepción.

It was evident that the enemy moved against our Gondra salient. On the 24th early in the morning the Bolivians, numbering more or less 1,500 men, and accompanied by two tanks, delivered a general assault upon our positions of Rancho Ocho. By nightfall we had repulsed all onslaughts. We wrought havoc in the enemy ranks. We destroyed one of the tanks and captured numerous prisoners. On our part, we maneuvered in the Falcón and Pozo Favorita sectors.

On the 25th there were new forceful drives by the enemy on Rancho Ocho, where we fought against a great numerical superiority of the enemy. The Commander of the Third Army Corps, who from the previous day had declared his situation to be precarious, reported that he had already employed all his reserves and that he might not be able to bear any new attacks if we could not send him more troops. On the same day I arranged for a battalion from Francia to reinforce him, and that dispelled the crisis.

On the 26th the combats continued in Rancho Ocho, where we had to make some retirement in one of the sectors of the line because someone shouted that the enemy was employing toxic gases. That possibly was due to the fact that a number of artillery shells exploded nearby. As is known, the acrid smoke from such explosions attacks the throat, and, in the excitement of the struggle, probably arose the belief that the enemy was using toxic gases. In

Pozo Favorita the enemy evaded our maneuver and retreated some kilometers.

On the 27th the enemy in Rancho Ocho was rendered immovable, and we repulsed strong attacks upon Pirizal. The combats in Rancho Ocho, Gondra, and Pirizal continued stubbornly throughout the 28th. Important enemy troops approached Herrera.

On the 29th in Herrera we repulsed furious assaults, and in Gondra and Rancho Ocho the intensity of the Bolivian attack diminished and we passed to the counterattack.

On the 30th we rendered the enemy in Herrera immovable on all sides. We maneuvered in the Francia sector and struggled energetically in Rancho Ocho and Gondra, but without material results. On the 31st we defeated the enemy in Herrera, who retired, and the fight continued in Rancho Ocho, Gondra, and Pirizal. In the Francia sector one of our movements failed.

At 11 A.M. on that day the President arrived by plane at the airfield of my Headquarters. As always, Dr. Ayala displayed sanguine confidence in the imminent settlement of the conflict and, consequently, insisted upon the idea of the defensive. In my close contact with the military situation of the moment I viewed the problem from a different angle. Therefore I reasoned with the President in favor of the necessity for starting new offensive actions, which in my judgment should be initiated in the shortest possible time since I had perceived that the new series of actions by the local forces of the enemy were approaching their termination.

The President returned to the Capital on September 2nd, without, in fact, giving me any express authorization to undertake any offensive operations. But since I had made him acquainted with my reasons, which were well founded, I believed myself authorized at least to launch some action of limited objective in order to improve our line of defense which was by no means satisfactory. The wedge that the enemy had driven in Campo Aceval (Rancho Ocho) with some 6,000 men might well grow into a serious menace. For the moment the local situation showed a favorable trend with the slackening of the Bolivian activities, and we ought to turn to good account this opportunity without loss of time and suppress that menace. The slowly increasing calm of those days in the enemy camp might signify nothing more than a brief pause for reorganization and assembly of troops and equipment; therefore we had to take advantage of it immediately, even with the few resources which we had at our disposal. It was necessary not only to profit by the enemy's passivity but also to act with the utmost rapidity in order to anticipate him.

In the Campo Aceval (Rancho Ocho) salient the Bolivians continued to assemble more troops, as well as in Pirizal, with the obvious intention of persisting in the attempt to isolate and destroy our troops in the Gondra sector. In all other sectors the measures of the enemy appeared to have the object of merely pinning us down to our positions.

On the Paraguayan side, as always, our means of transport scarcely permitted us to supply ourselves throughout our own lines, for which reason we could consider only short movements as preparations for our action, which however should be accomplished with much rapidity. Nevertheless, I was irrevocably resolved that once the offensive was started, it should not be interrupted if possible, so that the impending action, which on account of circumstances would inevitably take a local character, must open the way to the realization of the idea of continuing the offensive.

Our general reserve, already partly engaged, was in Falcón; the Third Army Corps had employed all its reserve; but the First Army, which covered the Francia sector, still preserved its reserve. Therefore the only recourse for troops to which I could resort was this last reserve.

I gave up, as momentarily impossible, the tempting prospect of an action from Gondra towards Zenteno in combination with another from Francia towards the same objective, and proposed something more modest as a first step. It was necessary, however, in any case, to wipe out the enemy salient in Campo Aceval. That could not be done by a direct action upon that sector since we had not sufficient troops, especially on the side of Rancho Ocho, and further, the breaking of lines such as we must attempt costs many lives.

There was not, then, any other possibility than that of moving from Falcón and from Francia, and thus I resolved. The action determined upon would fulfill, in addition to all the conditions required by the circumstances, that other which I judged of essential importance, namely, the continuation of the offensive. It was, in effect, a maneuver upon one of the wings of the enemy's disposition.

I shaped the project of our maneuver as a swift involving movement upon the nucleus of the enemy troops in Pampa Grande, which covered, on the north side, the Bolivian disposition, in coordination with another of similar character against the Bolivian defenders of Pozo Favorita, in order to fall afterwards from both directions upon the Francia-Zenteno road behind the defenders of this sector, and consummate their destruction. (See Map No. 3.)

With the object of hastening the suppression of the enemy wedge at Rancho Ocho and in order not to leave the enemy Command much liberty for the employment of their reserves, I conceived further the undertaking of secondary actions by the sides of Gondra and Zenteno, which would converge upon Campo Aceval and which would be executed some days before so as to detract the enemy's attention and deceive him with regard to the principal action.

Part Three

THE OFFENSIVE TO THE END

CHAPTER VIII

Pampa Grande and Pozo Favorita

In order to save time, the day that the President returned to Asunción I summoned the Commander of the Third Army Corps for the day following to Mister Kent, and the Commander of the First Army Corps to a point upon the road to Boquerón, for the purpose of briefing them personally.

On September 3rd at 4 A.M. I left for Mister Kent, where, at the hour arranged, I met the Commander of the Third Army Corps and gave him the appropriate instructions. On the 4th I returned to General Headquarters in Villa Militar, and on the 5th I left to interview the Commander of the First Army Corps, as arranged.

I likewise ordered the Commander of the Second Army Corps in Toledo to send one of his regiments to Francia.

On the 6th I gave orders for the commencement of actions upon Campo Aceval, which were to begin on the 8th. On the same day, at the request of the Commander of the Third Army Corps, we performed the anticipated backward movement of our troops in the Gondra sector in order to strengthen our action on that side, towards the north.

On the 7th the enemy clashed against our new position in Gondra and suffered severe losses.

On the 9th at 4 A.M. I left for Francia and Falcón with the object of hastening the preparations and to inform myself about the whole situation. That day our attacks in Campo Aceval were carried out under good conditions, and also upon the Zenteno road, where we compelled the advanced enemy posts to retire upon their principal line. In Herrera we also attacked with success.

On the 10th we conquered by resolute assaults some enemy positions in Gondra, Campo Aceval, and Herrera. Without doubt, those actions contributed considerably to the deception of the enemy with respect to our real intentions. On that day I ordered that the initiation of our movement upon Pampa Grande and Pozo Favorita should commence on the following day.

My visit to Francia and Falcón was particularly useful because it permitted me to observe some relaxation in the magnificent offensive ardor of the first months, especially in some units, and I thereupon resolved to take direct charge of the front of Pampa Grande-Falcón in order to infuse more vigor in the action.

I returned at once to General Headquarters in Villa Militar, and the following day, the 11th, the date of the inception of the maneuvers, I installed my P.C. in Francia. During the day I visited all the divisional and regimental commanders in their posts of combat and I realized that growing enthusiasm was reborn on all sides. At 3:15 P.M. after my visit of inspection I returned to my P.C. in Francia.

On the same day, the 11th, an audacious commander of one of our battalions which was attacking the Francia-Zenteno road, managed to sneak by the east and to fall upon the road behind the enemy positions. In Pampa Grande and Pozo Favorita our movements progressed well.

On the 12th I received a report by radio from the Commander of the troops in Pampa Grande to the effect that from 6:30 A.M. they had intercepted the enemy road to Zenteno. On that day a significant calm reigned in the enemy camp on all fronts which were not attacked. It was evident that we had succeeded in getting ahead of them and that they were preparing their countermeasures; which meant that for the moment the initiative was in our hands.

On the 13th I reinforced the troops of incursion in Pampa Grande and we firmly closed the enemy road, thus preparing a new front towards the south. In Campo Aceval we gained much ground by our attacks.

On the 14th we surrounded the enemy in Pozo Favorita. On the same day our troops of incursion received in Pampa Grande a fierce attack from the outer side, and thus began an extraordinarily bitter struggle which lasted throughout the day. From the inner side the Bolivians attacked also with the object of clearing their road. The Paraguayans held out admirably, but the task of that day, which was frightfully hot, was a trying one, and by night the Paraguayan Commander suggested to me that he should retire to his base. As was nearly always the case, the radio of our troops of incursion was not in order. I intervened with all possible rapidity, sending to him reinforcements and water, and for that purpose I utilized even the orderlies and hospital assistants, taken from all places, and I gave the strictest orders to maintain at all costs the closure of the enemy road. During that night no one had a single minute of repose. Throughout the day some Bolivian planes had thrown packets of coca[29] to the besieged in Pampa Grande.

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[29] *Coca* is a shrub the leaves of which are constantly chewed by the Bolivian Indians in order to alleviate hunger and to sustain endurance. A ration of coca was essential to the Bolivian soldiers.—J.F.E.

On the 15th, early in the morning, our troops attacked on all sides, and they sealed the fate of the enemy beleaguered in Pampa Grande and Pozo Favorita, simultaneously.

At 9 A.M. on this day a squadron of the Bolivian Loa regiment deserted and came into our lines in Pampa Grande. At 9:30 A.M. an envoy officer from Pozo Favorita presented himself in our lines and requested in the name of his companions our conditions for surrender. At 12 o'clock Lt. Col. González Quint adopted the same procedure in Pampa Grande and the local Paraguayan Commander, by my authorization, signed with him a document of surrender.

At 12:10 detachments of regiments Lanza No. 5 of cavalry and No. 18 of infantry surrendered in Pozo Favorita with 4 officers and 250 men. At 2:20 P.M. in Pampa Grande the Loa and Ballivián regiments surrendered with 18 chiefs and officers and 600 troops. The Bolivian aviators, not knowing that they had succumbed, threw provisions on Pampa Grande throughout the afternoon, an action which was cordially welcome since it aided to assuage the urgent calls of the empty stomachs of our soldiers.

Seeking the completion of our intention to close the pincers upon the points behind the enemy troops which defended the Francia-Zenteno road, we pursued our movements against such troops as had come to the aid of the besieged in Pampa Grande and in Pozo Favorita. But in the difficult terrain of the Chaco, movements of that kind were always tough and very slow so that the enemy never lacked time to evade efficiently those pursuits.

On the 17th the enemy retreated in the Pampa Grande sector as well as upon the Zenteno road in order to avoid the bite of our pincers. Also in Campo Aceval the Bolivians made a new retreat. In those sectors our troops had to undertake the pursuit under arduous conditions imposed upon them by the nature of the terrain.

With the retreat of the Bolivians who defended the Francia-Zenteno road and bearing in mind the form that the general line of enemy defense adopted, and further the difficulties of the terrain which had greatly retarded our movements, I considered unfeasible for the time being the closing of our pincers upon the Zenteno road, which I had contemplated.

On the 18th I returned to my General Headquarters in Villa Militar with the intention of preparing the continuation of the offensive, for which I should try to secure the President's sanction backed by the successes already attained. As a consequence of those actions I was promoted to Brigadier-General.

In order to gain time for our preparations, and especially to infuse the subordinates with the idea that the offensive must continue, I left instructions for the Commander of the First Army Corps and summoned the Commander of the Second Army Corps to my General Headquarters, and the Commanders of the Third Army Corps to Guaraní. And since the impending operations would be of much greater moment, I warned Bahía Negra to be in readiness in case they should be called upon to co-operate. At the same time I ordered the detachment of the Pilcomayo, which covered the region on the banks of that river, to march towards Nanawa.

On the 19th we continued our advances of slow pursuit. On the 20th the enemy in the Pozo Favorita sector evaded a new envolvement and left in our power their stores of munitions and of food, their hospital equipment and numerous prisoners. At 10 A.M. on the same day I had my interview with the Commander of the Third Army Corps in Guaraní, a point situated upon the new road from Villa Militar to Nanawa, and at 4 P.M. I returned to my Headquarters in Villa Militar.

By September 23rd the enemy confronted us in a continuous line of positions in nearly all sectors, with which we made close contact.

With the series of actions of the past fifteen days we had attained our principal objective, which was the suppression of the wedge in Campo Aceval (Rancho Ocho) and had destroyed important enemy effectives, but, above all, we had prodded the initiative and the offensive spirit of our troops which had been dampened by nine months of defensive action. In order to give a brief rest to our troops, which they well merited, we devoted ourselves to a great effort of reorganization and to a general re-supply of all units with a view to the approaching operations.

The enemy Command was much affected by the setback in Pampa Grande and Pozo Favorita but endeavored to appear calm with a statement in which they said that it was only "one of those many contingencies of war, of little importance." Pampa Grande and Pozo Favorita, nevertheless, were actions destined to have a far-reaching tactical and strategical significance because they paved the way for operations which would eventually culminate in the collapse of the Bolivian army.

In my interview with the Commander of the Third Army Corps in Guaraní a local thrust at the enemy troops which defended the Pirizal sector was resolved upon as one of the actions to be undertaken by that Army Corps. Consequently, on September 27th the movement of the Paraguayan division in that sector commenced, and it succeeded in intercepting the road of retreat of the enemy, so that from that moment the enemy was unable to receive any kind of supplies. But, to the surprise of everybody, and for reasons not yet sufficiently explained, the local Paraguayan Commander, on his own accord, on the following day, the 28th, ordered his troops of incursion on the enemy road to retire to their base. As a result, an action which promised a sure outcome of positive benefit from the general point of view, was spoiled.

On the 29th I solicited an interview with the President, with the object of obtaining from him authorization to continue the offensive, for which I had already prepared my plan. The reader will observe that, confident of securing the presidential approval, our preparations were actively pursued, taking advantage of the relative calm of those days.

On October 3rd the President arrived at my General Headquarters. We discussed together several hypotheses. One of them dealt with the possibility of an irruption in the direction of Platanillos, and thence to Ballivián. But this operation would leave us in possession only of geographical points which at the most might bring about some political repercussion. Further, in order to accomplish it we possessed neither sufficient troops nor the adequate means of transport. So we turned to examine another variant, one to which I was already decidedly committed and which consisted, in brief, in an envolvement, in its first stage, of the north wing of the enemy disposition, which would be achieved with the largest possible number of troops, and accompanied by an irruption to the north of Campo Aceval or by a rupture of the salient in Gondra in order to complete with rapidity the entire encircling movement; and, in its second stage, acting always upon the right, to reach Muñoz before the enemy of the Nanawa front.

On October 4th the President approved of the latter plan and he returned to Asunción, taking with him a memorandum of our necessities for the approaching battle, among which trucks for our transport were paramount.

Because of the apparent restriction of that plan and its division into two stages, more than one reader may wonder why the plan had in view the destruction of only a part of the enemy front and not of the total at the same time; why it did not undertake, instead of a single movement, an all-embracing one, by the north and by the south, by Francia and by Nanawa simultaneously.

The reasons were always the same—shortage of transport and insufficient effectives. But the apparent restriction of the plan was in reality nothing more than the adaptation of the mission of our army to its possibilities, without neglecting the purpose of totally destroying the enemy troops. Further, the principal instrument to be used was rapidity, in order to surprise the enemy Command.

I cherished the idea and maintained it during the entire process of the battle that, once we secured the first advantage of our main effort which was that of envolvement by the west, we should launch with all velocity the greatest mass of available troops directly upon Muñoz. This latter operation would depend altogether upon the trucks included in the memorandum delivered to the President (which trucks, incidentally, did not arrive opportunely notwithstanding the duration of the battle).

Immediately after the return of the President and after his approval of my plan, I imposed upon our preparations the maximum celerity and the widest possible amplitude. Since I was confident that if we succeeded in achieving our object in its integrity, of which possibility I had no doubt, peace, so much desired by all the Paraguayans, might be brought about, I decided to stake on this action all our resources.

During those days the detachment from the Pilcomayo River, one thousand strong, reached Nanawa after twelve days of strenuous marching across the country through an unknown desert. From Toledo we transported artillery and two regiments of the Second Army Corps. From Bahía Negra we brought a thousand men, and from Asunción all the armed forces of the police, who numbered a thousand. I finally assembled all the units of sappers who worked for the betterment and preservation of the roads.

On October 6th in Puerto Casado, I held an interview with the Commander of Bahía Negra, who had come by plane to that point. On the 12th I personally inspected the sectors of Campo Aceval, Gondra and Nanawa, and on the 15th those of Falcón and Francia. By those means I was able to explain my intentions in detail to all the commanders concerned. On the same day at 5 P.M. I returned to General Headquarters in Villa Militar.

On the 16th I reorganized our General Reserve in Falcón with three regiments and a battalion of sappers. On the 18th at 6 A.M. I left again for Falcón, where I installed my P.C. of combat at 6 P.M. on the same day. On the 19th I made a rapid tour of inspection of the line from Pampa Grande to Campo Aceval. All preparations by that time were nearing completion.

On the 20th I gave the general order for the battle which was to begin on the 22nd. Apropos of that order[30] certain considerations would not appear to be amiss here. In the first place, it was dictated upon an incomplete acquaintance with the network of roads then existing. We had no perfect map of the Chaco. Moreover, it had to be modified in the course of the operations—the reaction of the enemy did not develop along the pattern I had anticipated and which had induced me to divide the operations into two stages. It is always presumable that the enemy will respond within the compass of a somewhat rigid logic. In the case of the battle of Zenteno the enemy acted in a fashion entirely different from that which we expected, and impaired his situation to our advantage. Therefore there was no necessity to divide the operations into two stages because by means of one action only we could secure the same result. Thus is confirmed the well-known rule that orders of that nature must contain provisions solely for the initial part of the battle because of the impossibility to foresee the reaction of the enemy, a reaction which may cause to modify the method to be adopted in order to attain the objective sought.

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[30] This document is here omitted because its publication would be more fitting in a purely military history of the war.—J.F.E.

On the 21st I ordered the postponement of the beginning of the battle until the 23rd at the request of the Commander of the Third Army Corps. On the 22nd everything was ready.

CHAPTER IX

The Battle of Zenteno and the Bolivian Surrender In Campo Via

We were about to engage virtually our entire forces. In the remaining sectors there would be left only very small detachments. I deemed it advisable to direct the development of operations from a point near the line in order that I could intervene without delay as necessity arose. Hence I installed my P.C. close to the line, in Falcón.

On the 23rd at the zero hour we commenced the attacks all along the line, from Pampa Grande to Nanawa, upon a front of nearly seventy kilometers. Paraguayan aviation was absent from that memorable contest because we had no planes. During that day we forced the enemy in all parts to fall back upon his principal position.

On the 24th the Paraguayan troops operating on the front north of Campo Aceval advanced eight kilometers, encountering little resistance. In the Francia sector we subdued all of the first position of the enemy.

On the 25th our right wing in Francia advanced as far as Kilometer 10 in the direction of Zenteno. We also gained ground in Pozo Favorita. On the front north of Campo Aceval we advanced one kilometer, where we came upon a continuing line which we were unable to overcome. In Pirizal we overpowered an enemy redoubt.

On the 26th we occupied the principal enemy position of Pozo Favorita.

On the 27th we compelled the enemy to retreat upon his extreme right wing (the Charata or Alihuatá Viejo sector). We gained further ground in Favorita. We verified on that day that we were in contact with a powerful defensive position which extended more or less from Charata to Nanawa.

On the same day, the 27th, we repulsed a strong enemy attack on Fortín Galpón, to the north of Bahía Negra, causing the Bolivians severe casualties and the loss of arms and equipment. This attack was the only one that the enemy attempted in that sector during the entire year of 1933, despite the huge amount of war material which he had in that region.

On the 28th, between Nanawa and Pirizal, we broke open the principal enemy position on a front of three kilometers and penetrated the line to the depth of four kilometers. In the Pampa

Grande sector our attacks progressed materially. With the realization that we were facing a more or less continuing line of the enemy, we commenced on the 28th to change the apportionments of our forces. In view of the fact that we were checked in the sector north of Campo Aceval, contrary to our expectations, because we came in conflict with a powerfully organized position of whose existence we were not aware, I withdrew the troops from that front and transferred them to Favorita. The reader will understand that up to that day we were attacking with equal energy in all sectors engaged. It was my intention to drive back the enemy to that point where he might have decided to establish his definite line of defense, and at the same time to conceal the true direction of our principal action. The terrain in which we fought did not lend itself to any attempts at involving movements against an enemy in retreat.

On the 29th all sectors labored to organize better the lateral connections between the attacking units and to open *picadas* of circulation.

On the 30th an attack on our part in the Favorita sector thrust a wedge two kilometers wide which penetrated to the third line of the enemy, and on our extreme right wing we advanced towards Charata.

On the 31st, as a consequence of those attacks, the enemy who defended the Francia-Zenteno road retreated. In the sector of our attack between Nanawa and Pirizal we advanced one kilometer. The same day we repulsed an attack in the Toledo sector upon our outposts of Kilometer 10 in the direction of Corrales and we pursued the enemy as far as Kilometer 16.

On November 1st the enemy pressed strongly upon our outposts of Kilometer 53 on the Herrera-Platanillos road.

The same day, the 1st, I received a report from Bahía Negra informing me that the enemy had taken our Fortín Coronel Bogado. The news, though not without importance, disturbed me little. In that distant region we had very few troops. I realized that the distance of something less than 200 kilometers separating Coronel Bogado from Bahía Negra was to be covered through very unpropitious territory and, in any case, we might have enough time to assist with more forces.

We employed the three first days of November in preparing a new series of local actions, seeking always the definite position of the enemy defense and perfecting means of connection between our troops.

On the 4th we renewed our attack on Favorita widening the wedge which we had driven in the enemy line and advancing 800 meters more. In Herrera the enemy retreated.

On the 5th in the Pampa Grande sector we attacked and pierced the three lines of the enemy's principal position, capturing prisoners and arms. In Favorita there was a new retreat of the enemy. At midnight of the 5th, as a consequence of the rupture of the enemy line in the Pampa Grande sector, other enemy retreats on our extreme right wing were brought about.

On the 6th, as a result of his retreat on the extreme right and in the Favorita sector, the enemy retired also in the sector of the Francia-Zenteno road and left in our power his positions along a front of 11 kilometers. In all that day we could advance scarcely three kilometers in the sector of the Bolivian retreat. The difficulties of the terrain which was covered with thick bushy woods, made efficient pursuit impossible. In the course of the following days we endeavored to re-establish contact with the enemy and we prepared other actions.

That time we had at last the impression that the new defensive positions of the enemy were definite; and since we already had drawn sufficiently near to Charata, from whence we knew there existed a road leading to Saavedra or Muñoz, it appeared to me that the moment for inaugurating our enveloping movement approached. Accordingly I ordered the transportation of more troops, taken from Favorita and from the southernmost front, to our extreme right wing.

On the 11th I ordered the Commander of Toledo to send an additional regiment to Francia, and we continued with the displacement towards the right wing. The same day we undertook an assault in the Pirizal area taking a new enemy position along a front of 800 meters.

By that time I commenced to confirm the basic soundness of the procedure adopted by us, which consisted in continuous attacks almost without interruption upon that extensive front stretched somewhat from the west of Charata to Nanawa.

The enemy, actually, after employing all his reserves, as we desired, began to weaken his lines here and there with the object of hurriedly transporting detachments of troops thus obtained in order to reinforce those parts of his line which were strongly attacked by us.

The Commander of Nanawa made known to me the weakening of the enemy line in the south of his front, and, with commendable forethought, requested authorization to attack. In a short telephone conversation all was arranged for an immediate attack.

At 2 A.M. on the 12th our troops fell upon and cracked the first enemy line to the south of Nanawa along a front of 1,000 meters. They advanced rapidly some 800 meters and jeopardized the situation of one of the units of the Bolivian extreme right wing. At dawn on the 13th, in new assaults, we captured the other lines of the enemy positions. The Bolivian regiment No. 16 was cut off and with great haste surrounded by the Paraguayans. At 3 P.M. that regiment surrendered with 11 officers and 413 troops. There fell into our hands 30 machine guns, 1,000,000 cartridges, etc. As a consequence of that action 10 kilometers of enemy positions on the extreme south of his army were taken by us.

With the operation previously described we averted a danger pointing to the south side of Nanawa and also we threatened to outflank the other enemy wing. We created in that manner a disquieting situation for the Bolivian Command because we obliged them to rush more troops towards the point in danger.

The following day, the 14th, we advanced in an open outflanking movement to within 8 kilometers to the southwest of Nanawa. In the Herrera sector our patrols approached Kilometer 63 in the direction of Platanillos without encountering the enemy, a fact which demonstrated that General Kundt had transferred his troops from that sector to the theater of the principal action. As a consequence I felt myself more secure on that side.

On the 15th our extreme right wing, with a vigorous push, advanced some 1,500 meters. In Favorita and in Campo Aceval the enemy retreated and we advanced to a depth of 3 kilometers on a front of 15 kilometers, and despite the numberless difficulties of the woody terrain we maintained the contact. In Nanawa new enemy troops tenaciously opposed our flanking movement and thwarted us.

On the 16th the enemy retreated still more in Favorita and in Pozo Charcas, and throughout the day we re-established close contact on all sides. On the south we recaptured Fortín Mariscal López, where the enemy left in our hands large quantities of equipment and munitions.

On the 17th the Bolivians abandoned Puesto F, on their extreme left wing, from where they had vigilantly watched our movements.

That series of actions led us to make contact with another continuing line which was more powerfully organized than the previous one but because of the insufficiency of our artillery we were unable to break it. That was the third and last position of the enemy defense.

Therefore the moment had arrived for us to pass with the utmost rapidity to our projected maneuver.

During the following days we busied ourselves with the consolidation of the new positions, with linking our forces laterally and with the transference of more troops towards our right. We allowed some rest to the troops and made our final arrangements.

With the enemy troops strongly held upon their final line of defense and after transporting our reserves upon the extreme right wing, in conformity with our plan, we placed before General Kundt the most pathetic alternative of his career. President Salamanca shortly before had advised him from La Paz that it would be prudent to retire from Fortín Alihuatá (Zenteno), but General Kundt would pay no heed to him, and now that he could verify the wisdom of that advice it was too late. He had no other recourse but to remain true to himself and to cling desperately to the terrain now occupied by his troops. The inexorable logic of his situation was that either retirement or resistance would equally conduce to the same doom.

On the 25th at 10 P.M. there arrived at my General Headquarters in Villa Militar a delegation of the League of Nations, headed by Señor Álvarez del Vayo.[31] After assigning the members to their respective quarters they were invited to dine. In the course of the meal we spoke of generalities. I recollect that, among other things, I told Señor Álvarez del Vayo that we Paraguayans were soldiers of the League of Nations and that for more than one year we had been fighting for the maintenance of the principles of that institution.

At 9 A.M. on the following day I interviewed again the members of the delegation in order to arrange the program of visits which they desired to make. Señor Álvarez del Vayo and the other civil members would visit the Mennonite colonies and then return to Puerto Casado. The military members would go to the front of operations in Francia and Nanawa and from the latter point would return to Asunción by plane.

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[31] The League of Nations, of which both Paraguay and Bolivia were members, had kept an expectant attitude during the negotiations conducted first by the American nations in Washington and later by Argentina and Chile as a result of the conference of Mendoza (*supra,* note 24). After the failure of those efforts, Paraguay declared the existence of a state of war with Bolivia, on May 10, 1933. Bolivia protested against that move before the League of Nations, demanding that Paraguay be declared aggressor under the provision of Article 16 of the Covenant. The League instead decided to send a Commission to the countries involved in the war in order to negotiate a settlement. That Commission arrived in Asunción on November 18th and later went to the Chaco, as noted by Marshal Estigarribia. The members of the Commission were as follows: Count Luiggi Aldrovandi Marescoti (Italy); Sr. Julio Álvarez del Vayo (Spain); General of Division Henri Freydenberg (France); Lieutenant Colonel Raúl Rivera Flandes (Mexico), and Brigadier General Alexander Robertson (Great Britain). Furthermore, Dr. Juan Antonio Buero (Uruguay) and M. H. Vigier (France), both of the Secretariat General of the League, accompanied the Commission.

I find in my war diary the following entry on the 26th:

> During the conversations that I had with the members of the commission of the League of Nations, I expressed very clearly our unbreakable decision to continue the war with the certainty of crushing the enemy, and that our people in arms would not accept any discussion upon the littoral of the Paraguay River.

General Freydenberg, the French delegate, somewhat surprised by the assurance with which I spoke of the crushing of the enemy, told me that war was fickle and that it was impossible to predict with exactitude all its contingencies. But my faith in the impending collapse of the enemy was so profound that I responded: "Do not doubt, General. I am positive. The destruction of the Bolivian army is a mathematical operation."

Let us return to the military operations. On the 27th the enemy rectified his line on his left wing leaving in our power a front of 4 kilometers powerfully protected with barbed wire entanglements.

In those days an unusual condition in the Paraguayan subordinate Command in Francia came to a crisis. We had already assembled all our possible forces in men and matériel on our right wing in accord with our plan. Consequently, then, the hour had struck to launch the action and accomplish the decisive movement. But in that vital moment an obstacle as powerful as it was unexpected interposed. The Commander of our First Army Corps, with divers pretexts, which he renewed from day to day, stated that he was not yet prepared to begin the movement, despite the fact that he had everything at hand and all circumstances combined to favor him.

On the 28th I went personally to the P.C. of the First Army Corps in Francia in order to explain to the Commander the urgency of action. But his stalling continued throughout the 29th and the 30th, and on December 1st all his subordinate officers, who had been ready for some days, began to give signs of losing confidence in their chief.

On December 2nd the survey that I had ordered in Campo Aceval and in Gondra upon the possibility of an action of rupture in combination with the outflanking movement, terminated, but the Commander of the First Army still persisted in his evasiveness. That led me to the conviction that it was a case either of weakness or of fear of the responsibility, which was incompatible with the situation of the moment.

On the 3rd at 5 A.M. I left my P.C. in Falcón for Francia, arriving there at 8 o'clock and I personally informed the Commander that from that moment I would take direct charge of the command of the First Army Corps.

Some minutes after I communicated this resolution to the subordinate officers, I made a visit of inspection to all the front in charge of the corps. In a P.C. on our extreme right wing I assembled the subordinate commanders, proceeded to some reorganization in their commands and gave orders to start the movement that same day. Having decided upon the rupture of the enemy line in the salient of Gondra, I summoned the Commander of the Third Army Corps and the Commander of the division of Gondra to an interview on the following day with the purpose of personally giving them instructions. At 10:30 A.M. on the 4th my troops of envelopment forced back victoriously and with great energy the enemy detachments which opposed them, thus outlining very clearly our envelopment. On the same day at 8 A.M. in Kilometer 39 from Falcón towards Rancho Ocho I held a conference with the commanders concerned. After making known to them in detail my intentions I left with them the following particular order No. 69:

> I—From the mass of informations received it is deduced that the enemy should have considerably weakened his effectives of defense in the Gondra sector.
>
> The First Army Corps is conducting with success its enveloping movement on the left wing [west] of the enemy.
>
> II—The Third Army Corps with the troops from the Gondra sector duly reinforced will attack vigorously in order to break the enemy defensive line and try to intercept the road from Zenteno to Saavedra and make connection with the First Army Corps upon this road. . . .

At 5 P.M. on that day I returned to my P.C. in Francia.

Our transports were exposed during those days to overwhelming difficulties on account of torrential rains.

At 9 P.M. on the 4th a part of our troops of envelopment reported that they had intercepted the road from Zenteno to Pabón since the morning.

On the 5th an enemy detachment pressed violently upon Puesto F, situated at our extreme right, with the evident intention of checking our outflanking movement. Forthwith I transferred one of the regiments of my local reserve with the order to join the unit engaged at this point and try to destroy the enemy detachment.

The roads recently opened in the wood were in an appalling condition because of the rains which persisted to fall.

The preparations in Gondra continued actively and also, for secondary actions, in Campo Aceval and Favorita.

On the 6th since 1 P.M. our maneuvering troops had intercepted the road from Zenteno to Saavedra. On the same day they cut the secondary road from Zenteno to Pozo Negro, and thus only one road was left for the escape of the enemy troops, which was that leading through Pozo del Encanto to Puesto Mayor and Campo Vía.

By the morning on the 6th I had ordered the maneuvering division to try to reach *Cañadón* 31[32] through which the enemy might be passing. At 5 P.M. we easily took all the enemy positions along the Favorita front. At 6 P.M. the Bolivians retired their left wing. At 7 P.M. the retreat extended towards Campo Aceval. At 8 P.M. a report from our Third Army Corps stated that everything was ready in Gondra for the action of the following day.

On the 7th, at 1 A.M., our troops entered Charata. At dawn, in a magnificent assault, our First Division of Gondra broke the enemy lines and swept forward through Picada Velilla, in fulfilment of its mission, and captured prisoners, arms, and sundry equipments. A wind storm interrupted our telephonic connections until nearly the middle of the day. The same probably happened to the enemy because up to 10:30 A.M. some Bolivian planes were dropping bombs upon their own troops in their movements of retreat.

Since our forces had maintained contact from the previous day with an enemy troop at some 7 kilometers from Zenteno towards Saavedra, and having in hand some free units, I ordered a new movement in addition to the first, in order to sever from its base that enemy force with which contact was maintained. The order stated that the new interception of the road from Zenteno to Saavedra should be about the mouth of Picada Velilla in order to establish connection with the First Division which was operating from Gondra.

On the same day, the 7th, the enemy, which was pressing upon Puesto F, 400 strong, was destroyed by our troops, who captured a large number of prisoners. From that day the road was opened on that side, and, as always, with repressed anguish, we had to resign ourselves to the loss of this extraordinarily favorable advantage because of the eternal question of the failure of means of mobility. It is easy to imagine what would have occurred if the two regiments which were operating in this locality together with two divisions which at that moment were free could have been placed in trucks and carried to Muñoz. (See Map No. 4.)

On the day of such important accomplishments there was revealed to us precious information concerning the spiritual and nervous state which reigned in the enemy camp. A radio message in Quechua language[33] from Colonel Banzer, commander of one of the enemy divisions in retreat, the Ninth, directed to General Kundt, reported that his code key had been carelessly burned and he found himself cut off from the Fourth Division, which was also in retreat. The dispatch of General Kundt in reply to Banzer was still more eloquent. He said, "Proceed according to your situation"—which signified the abandonment of the command on the part of the enemy General in Chief precisely at the moment when it was most needed. The impression made upon General Kundt was without doubt very strong. At midnight we took Zenteno.

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[32] *Cañadón*, a word coined in the Chaco for a larger open field sparsely wooded.—J.F.E.

The following day, the 8th, notwithstanding our handicap, I ordered the Eighth Division, which was free, to march on foot via Charata towards Puesto Sosa and Muñoz.

On that day I wrote in my diary:

> Once again the failure of sufficient means of transport is lamentable. These would have enabled us completely to destroy the enemy army. The troops which at this moment we are sending westward by the right wing to intercept the road or roads from Saavedra to Muñoz, together with supplies, could have been rapidly transported.

At 10 P.M. on this day the Commander of the Third Army Corps reported that the enemy had retreated along all the front of Nanawa in the direction of Samaklay.

On the following day, the 9th, because of the information that Col. Peñaranda, commander of the Bolivian First Army Corps, which we had surrounded, was marching with reinforcements by the Saavedra-Zenteno road to open a way and assist his troops in retreat, I ordered our Sixth Division to proceed by forced marches to Puesto Pabón in order to intercept the Saavedra-Zenteno road behind Peñaranda, in the neighborhood of Kilometer-Seven-of-Saavedra. That was the third closing of the said road.

It appeared that Col. Peñaranda was inside our circle when we accomplished this new closing but he managed to escape personally with his staff by paths opened through the woods.

At 6:30 P.M. a telegram from the beleaguered enemy informed us that he would attack in Campo Vía the line constructed by our First Division, in an attempt to open a passage to the south. As was natural we took all the possible precautions. At 10:30 P.M. a detachment of our troops in movement made known to me that they were already upon the Zenteno-Saavedra road in the vicinity of Kilometer 16–17 of Zenteno, that is, almost mathematically in the place ordered, which was the mouth of Picada Velilla. Connection was sought immediately with the First Division towards Campo Vía.

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[33] *Quechua* is one of the two principal Bolivian Indian languages.—J.F.E.

When that troop emerged upon the Zenteno-Saavedra road, it casually encountered in that place two Bolivian tanks. One of them was mired. The occupants of the tanks attempted to put up a defense, but our men attacked them with machetes and obliged them to seek refuge within their vehicles. They surrendered shortly afterwards.

On the 10th at 8 P.M. I dictated to my subordinate commanders the terms of surrender to be presented to the enemy Command wherever it might be found. That day I exerted my most strenuous action to establish, with the greatest rapidity, the connection of the units of the First Division in movement which were preparing to receive the announced attack of the enemy.

At 9:30 A.M. I broadcast an open radio report in which I affirmed that we had surrounded the Bolivian Divisions Fourth and Ninth in "a triple circle." My intention was to leave to those divisions little hope of salvation despite the fact that our troops of envolvement had not yet made contact with each other. The effect of my announcement was instantaneous. At 1 P.M. General Kundt sent this desperate message to the Command of his surrounded units:

> The Command and the country have confidence that in these moments of anguish both Divisions will know how to save the situation.

The conversations held by the radio operators of Campo Vía and Muñoz, which were beyond the control of their superiors, also revealed the discouragement which prevailed in the enemy camp.[34]

At 5 P.M. on the 10th our First Division sustained a furious attack on its Campo Vía line, which was weakly organized. Our troops reeled back under that impact, but only after frightfully mowing down the Bolivian ranks, and at nightfall, in a counter-attack, they re-established their line. Some 200 Bolivians, however, had managed to sneak away, but they were again checked towards the south by a thin line of riflemen which the officers had opportunely organized with amazing rapidity. As night fell the combat ceased. At 7:45 P.M. I broadcast another open report upon the general tightening of the circle.

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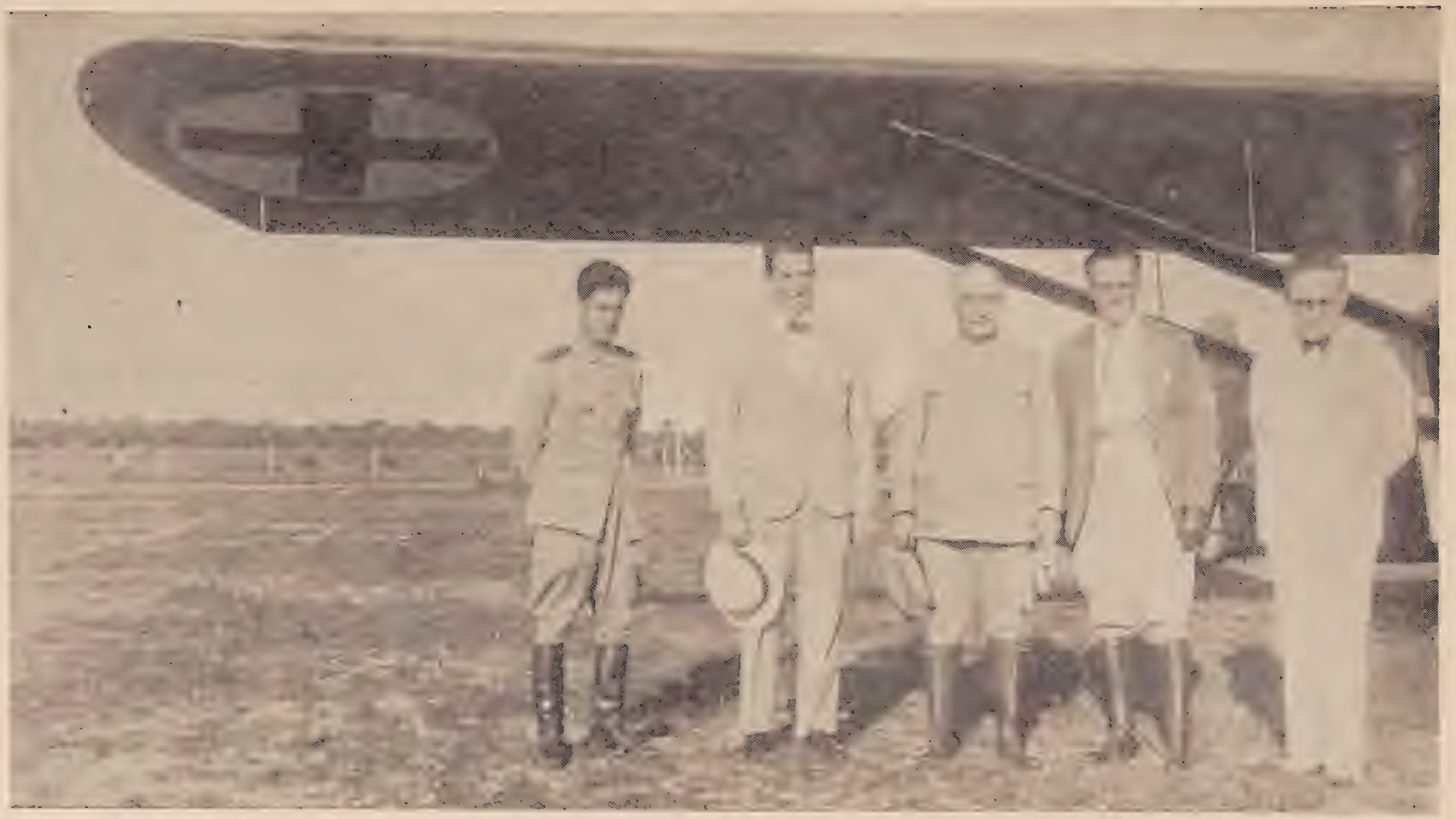
[34] The post-war Bolivian publications throw upon this episode abundant light, and they describe in all its intensity the anxiety which existed in the enemy camp, inside as well as outside of the circle. I limit myself here to reproducing only the impressions which we ourselves gathered inside of our own lines from the Bolivian messages that we caught.—J.F.E.



(Benjamín Banks' collection)

President Ayala (center) as he arrived at General Headquarters in the Chaco on the occasion of the Bolivian surrender in Campo Vía. Left to right: a military aide, Minister of Finance Benjamin Banks, President Ayala and senators Sosa and Da Rosa.

On the 11th, at 6 A.M., the President arrived at the airfield of Francia in company with the Minister of Finance, Señor Benjamín Banks, and Senators Carlos Sosa and J. Eliseo Da Rosa. I awaited them at the landing field, since on the previous day I had been advised of their coming by the Chief of the General Staff at Villa Militar, where they had passed the night. We were approaching the culmination of that titanic effort of our army, and the President was going to witness its climax.

At 8:15 A.M. the Bolivian Fourth and Ninth Divisions sent to General Kundt the following report:

> Situation desperate because of complete exhaustion of the troops. Discard all possibility of breaking the circle.

That cry of agony suddenly awakened the old enemy Commander in Chief from his stupor; but it was only a disorderly and fleeting awakening. He resumed the Command, which in his tribulation he had virtually relinquished since the 7th, and he issued the following incongruous order:

> To the Command of the Fourth and Ninth Divisions. Obey the order. Destroy matériel and break.

If the matériel were destroyed, how could any break be attempted?

Nearly at the same hour the Commander of our Third Army Corps reported that the detachment of enemy troops which had successfully slunk away on the previous night from our line in Campo Vía had surrendered. In the meanwhile the local Paraguayan Commander connected his telephone with that of the enemy and transmitted to Col. Banzer our conditions of surrender. At noon the Bolivian Fourth and Ninth Divisions surrendered without destroying their matériel. Two hundred and fifty chiefs and officers, among them two colonels, and 8,000 men were taken prisoners; 24 pieces of artillery, 60 mortars, 1,000 heavy and light machine guns, 11,000 rifles, 80 trucks and some millions of infantry cartridges constituted the spoils of war gathered by our troops in that resounding victory.

On the same day President Ayala issued from my P.C. the following proclamation:

> FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC TO THE ARMY
> IN THE CHACO
>
> Francia, December 11, 1933.
>
> I have the good fortune to be among the combatants in this day which means a decisive stage in the campaign against the invader of our national territory.

> From the Post of Combat of General Estigarribia I send to the chiefs, officers and combatant troops and all the services the gratitude of the Government of the Republic and of the entire nation. The success attained is not the fruit of accident but the logical result of a plan conceived with intelligence and achieved with the high spirit of abnegation and a firm determination to conquer.
>
> The Paraguayan people, who revive in these hours their glorious past, are demonstrating to the world that their tradition of honor, of bravery and patriotism is maintained.
>
> The name of Paraguay is engraved anew in history with the brilliance of its heroism. In the hearts of all citizens beats strongly the faith in our immortal fatherland.
>
> Post of Combat of the General in Chief.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

With the termination of that battle the national Government promoted me to the rank of General of Division.

General Kundt was deprived of his supreme Command of the Bolivian army. Thus he was held responsible for the disaster, and the error made concerning his gifts as a military leader was acknowledged. As a consequence of the magnitude of the catastrophe, Bolivia was confronted by the problem of having to rebuild entirely her army if she did not desire to resign herself to unconditional surrender. The culprit in that case, according to Bolivian opinion, was General Kundt.

Bolivia had just lost in Campo Vía the best of a brilliant cadre of chiefs and officers; the majority of her veteran troops, and equipment of all kinds in huge quantities. She was also compelled to bring about a change in the Command, a step which is always accompanied by serious handicaps in the course of a war. And as a final aftermath came the moral and economic repercussion of her military humiliation, which left the greater part of the Chaco in the power of Paraguay, a country which had never been supposed to have sufficient strength to oppose any Bolivian invasion.

Nevertheless, Paraguay rose as a redoubtable rival, full of unsuspected stamina and capable of delivering irreparable blows.

CHAPTER X

Consummation of the Destruction of the First Bolivian Army—An Armistice

With the termination of the Battle of Zenteno and the surrender of the enemy in Campo Vía ninety per cent of the Paraguayan army was assembled in that region, that is, on the extreme south of the front of active operations, but altogether unable to undertake any energetic and distant pursuit, as circumstances demanded. At any rate, I decided at least to reach Muñoz in order to wrest from the enemy that important base and consequently to control the strategic road which led therefrom towards the north. On the other hand I did not lose sight, for a single moment—without mentioning other reasons which I shall expound later—of the fundamental requirement that the center of gravity of our troops should be situated more to the north, in a position more or less central with regard to the ample deployment of the enemy and the general network of roads then existing.

With those ideas in mind on December 12th I transferred my post of combat from Francia to Zenteno in order to hasten the taking of Saavedra and to organize the pursuit towards Muñoz. To our Eighth Division, which had been marching towards the southwest even before the conclusion of the Battle of Zenteno and which approached its objective very slowly because it was on foot, I gave orders to take Puesto Sosa, through which it must pass, and to follow without delay to Puesto Moreno, 20 kilometers to the north of Muñoz, with the mission of intercepting the road that, as I have said, ran from Muñoz to the north passing by Moreno.

To our Sixth Division I assigned the task of taking Saavedra and then, following through to Muñoz, to make connection with the Eighth Division. To our Third Army Corps, which moved behind the enemy troops in the Nanawa sector, I gave the assignment of undertaking the pursuit by the road which ran to Muñoz through Tinfunqué from Cuatro Vientos. I retained various units on the battlefield for the purpose of collecting materials of all kinds and mainly for the capturing of the Bolivian soldiers who were still scattered throughout the woods.

That day, the 12th, we gathered six hundred more prisoners in the neighborhood of the road from Zenteno to Saavedra. The Third Army Corps meanwhile had taken Samaklay.

On the 13th the movement of our Sixth Division commenced upon Saavedra. At 1 P.M. the Commander of this unit reported that the *fortín* was on fire. He entered the fort at 8:15 P.M. and found it in ashes. On the same day the troops of our Third Army Corps entered Murguía.

On the 14th I left for Saavedra in order to take some measures intended to regulate better the pursuit by the Third Army Corps and the Sixth Division. The troops of the Third Army Corps occupied Tinfunqué that same day.

On the 15th at 1 A.M. the Eighth Division took Puesto Sosa, where the remaining part of the enemy regiment Florida under the command of Major Eduardo Vernaux surrendered. The Third Army Corps had already assembled troops amounting to one division in Cuatro Vientos.

With some airplanes which we still had at our disposal I ordered the reconnoitering of the Alihuatá and Saavedra regions in order to learn if there existed any roads which led directly towards La China, with the intention of sending troops already prepared for that purpose through that region to occupy this enemy *fortín.*

On the 16th our Eighth Division captured Puesto Moreno and cut the road which ran to the north through there from Muñoz. Our aviation informed me that they had found no road running from Alihuatá directly to La China. With that information there was no other alternative but to act upon La China by the side of Herrera.

On the 17th at midday I received a dispatch from the Ministry of Defense in which I was informed that the national Government had received a proposition sent from La Paz by the Commissioners of the League of Nations to the effect that the whole dispute of the Chaco be submitted to arbitration with the guarantees of security which we asked and had already been accepted by Bolivia. The dispatch stated also that the Government desired to settle the dispute without arbitration, to which end they were making every possible effort, and they consulted me as to whether it would be advantageous to offer an armistice of two or three weeks in order to negotiate without loss of time.

On the same day I replied that there would be no disadvantage in offering such armistice provided that it entered into operation within forty-eight hours from the present date. My reply was based, of course, upon reasons of a military character; but, on the other hand, I sincerely believed that peace then could be achieved and that an armistice possibly would pave the way. From the military point of view it was at least necessary for us to take Muñoz since at that moment we had no means of carrying out any pursuit beyond that *fortín.* Further I desired to transport the principal body of our troops to Platanillos but out of sight of the enemy airplanes. Another weighty reason supported such transportation. By that time we were unable to prolong our line of supplies beyond Muñoz because of the scarcity of means of transport, but it was essential to pursue the enemy in any form and without delay. A glance at the map will show that acting from Platanillos with the elements at our disposal at that moment we could at least reach Fortín Cabezón in the direction of Ballivián, because Cabezón was approximately the same distance as Muñoz from our principal base of supply which was Villa Militar, and if the war were to continue, in Cabezón we should be nearer Ballivián.

On the 18th our information service reported that the enemy had commenced the evacuation of Muñoz. We accelerated accordingly the advance of our troops in that direction. On the same day I ordered the assembly in Francia of some regiments as a preliminary measure to our concentration towards Platanillos.

On the 19th I insisted that the commands of the Third Army Corps and Divisions Second, Sixth and Eighth, which were engaged in pursuit of the enemy, should display greater energy and more rapidity in their actions in order to capture, the same day, Muñoz and Platanillos. I also ordered the occupation of Corrales.

At 11 A.M. I received a message from the Minister of Defense stating that our Government had arranged an armistice with the Government of Bolivia which would go into effect that same day, the 19th, at midnight, and would last until the same hour on the 30th. Despite the difficulty of making connections with all the troops in full movement in the zone laid waste by the enemy, I succeeded in conveying to all of them the order to cease hostilities in accordance with the ministerial communication.

On the same day I received a report from the Commander of Toledo to the effect that he had occupied Corrales, and I ordered him immediately to proceed and take possession of Fortín Bolívar, which he did. At 11 P.M. our forces entered Fortín Muñoz, which had been up to the previous week the Headquarters of Commander in Chief General Kundt, and which had been named the *Bolivian Capital of the Chaco.*

Our troops marching by the side of Herrera halted within seven kilometers of Platanillos because of the armistice.

The Bolivians denounced our occupation of Muñoz, stating that we had occupied it after midnight on the 19th. According to the report of General Peñaranda, the new Commander in Chief of the Bolivian army, transmitted to the Bolivian delegation before the Seventh Pan American Conference at Montevideo,

> . . . the Paraguayan forces commenced an attack upon the post called Moreno, yesterday December 19th at 4 P.M., but we repulsed them at 11 P.M. On the same day at 9 P.M., they initiated another attack upon Muñoz preceded by an intense artillery bombardment, which attack was held in check until midnight, at which moment the Paraguayan artillery fired its last shot without breaking our resistance. To the great surprise of this Command and the defending troops the Paraguayans, amply reinforced, recommenced a new bombardment and attack forty-five minutes after midnight which lasted until 4 A.M. of the 20th when this Command had to order a retreat and abandon Muñoz.

In the first place, Puesto Moreno fell into our power on the 16th, as I have already stated, and not on the 19th, as General Peñaranda affirmed, and it fell after a brief skirmish without our troops being repulsed for a single moment. As to the abandonment of Muñoz it was not ordered by the Bolivian Command as a result of our alleged attack on the 20th but some days before, so that it was only necessary for our troops to present themselves before the *fortín* in order to occupy it. And thus it happened on the night of the 19th. Further, the Bolivian allegation that Muñoz fell into our hands at dawn on December 20th was never corroborated by any proof, and the denunciation itself proves nothing. It was nothing more than a specious imputation.

On the 20th everything was quiet. We availed ourselves of the opportunity to reorganize all our units and our means of liaison and to speed the disposition of our troops in the directions of Camacho and Platanillos as preliminary preparations for future actions if the war continued.

On the 21st at 4 A.M. I left for Muñoz where I arrived at 8:30. Some minutes afterwards I assisted at a solemn raising of the national flag upon a flagpole rapidly erected by the forces which had captured the *fortín.* I assembled there the chiefs of the principal units and explained to them my new dispositions, which were to the effect that the Third Army Corps should take charge of that sector and the other troops should at once be in readiness to inaugurate their march upon Platanillos and Toledo.

The first impression that I received upon my visit to Muñoz was one of complete disillusion. Before the war and in the course of it we had heard much talk about the magnificent installations made there by the Bolivians during their occupation. It was said that the *Bolivian Capital of the Chaco* was the foundation of a beautiful city, already in full progress and even with a prosperous civilian population. All this proved to be a legend. I found there the remains of a poor collection of huts. The Headquarters

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Artillery pieces captured by the Paraguayans in Campo Vía.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Machine guns captured from the Bolivians.

of Commander in Chief General Kundt consisted of a miserable dirty shanty.

The Bolivians had set fire to practically all the huts—an action which under the circumstances appeared to be a commendable prophylactic precaution. Nevertheless we gathered in this place many elements in good condition, a great part of which had been cached underground.

I returned to my P.C. in Zenteno at 6:30 P.M. the same day.

With the object of shortening our lines of supply and shortly after adopting the new plan of operations I had ordered the opening of a road which, leaving Fortín Coronel Hermosa (formerly *Carayá; Huijay,* according to the Bolivians) went straight to Platanillos crossing an opening in the wood which existed in that region. This work was hastened at that time.

A little after the surrender of Campo Vía and while we surveyed the localities recently evacuated by the enemy in their old line of *fortines* along the Picomayo River there circulated a rumor that the Argentines had occupied Fortín Sorpresa Vieja which had fallen into our hands but which we later abandoned because of our scarcity of troops to garrison it permanently. I instituted an inquiry into the truth or otherwise of this rumor, and the Commander of the Third Army Corps dispatched an officer to the locality, who effectively corroborated its veracity and informed me accordingly on the 23rd.

That information aroused indignation in the Paraguayan army to such an extent that I felt uneasy and I referred the matter to the Government with a request that, if possible, the President should come to the Chaco. Dr. Ayala arrived without delay and we endeavored to quiet the general resentment by promising that the necessary steps would be taken to put an end to such abuse.

On the 25th the Ministry of Defense urged me to send a field officer to act as the military adviser of the Paraguayan delegation engaged in the peace negotiations in Montevideo,[35] and they suggested that this adviser should be Col. Manuel Garay, chief of my General Staff. As we see, everybody at that time shared in the belief that the possibility of peace existed in the near future, and I acceded to the request in view of the fact that Col. Garay was better informed than any other person for the purpose of advising our delegates authoritatively. In order to insure that the absence of Col. Garay would not interrupt the service, on the 26th I left my P.C. in Zenteno and returned to Villa Militar. Col. Garay departed by plane for Asunción the same day at 5:50 in the morning.

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[35] The Commission of the League of Nations (*supra,* note 31), after visiting Paraguay and the Chaco, went to Bolivia. While in La Paz, it made proposals for an arrangement, and then it moved to Montevideo to discuss with the representatives whom the parties concerned might agree to appoint. Colonel Garay was appointed military counsellor of the Paraguayan representatives.

Meanwhile the concentration of our troops of the Third Army Corps continued with the exasperating slowness imposed upon us by the scarcity of means of transport. This was carried out with the object of shifting the mass of our troops of movement more to the north. To that end we had had to adopt the only feasible procedure, namely, the trucks which conveyed victuals returned full of troops. We could not afford to employ trucks especially for the conveyance of victuals and others exclusively for the transport of troops. The greatest transportation made by that procedure was that of the Sixth Division which was carried in 130 trucks from Muñoz to Toledo.

On the 27th the Government consulted me with regard to the advisability of a prolongation of the suspension of hostilities. I replied that we might accede to an extension until January 6th, 1934. I calculated that by that date I would be able to complete the distribution of our troops.

As was logical I had ordered a very strict vigilance upon the activities of the enemy so as always to be in a condition to take opportune countermeasures, and also as a preparation for future movements, if hostilities were resumed. Consequently I was acquainted with the slightest movements made by the enemy in the posts close to ours. On December 28th I received a report from the Commander of the garrison of Toledo that the enemy was displaying much patrol activity on the side of Camacho, and the Commander of Fortín Herrera informed me that on the 28th the enemy had evacuated Platanillos. I ordered our troops to stay where they were.

With that information I comprehended that Bolivia at this time was averse to making peace. Undoubtedly she was not in the mood. The aforesaid moves were not simply precautionary but they pointed to a renewal of operations. It was understandable that the Bolivians would try to make new concentrations, but why should they totally evacuate certain points? I received the definite impression that our adversaries proposed to continue the war in the hope, perhaps, of taking some revenge which would compensate them for the humiliation of Campo Vía.

On the 29th the Government apprised me that they had accepted the extension of the armistice with Bolivia until midnight of January 6th. I promptly communicated that information to our troops. On the same day the Commander of Toledo reported that the enemy had evacuated Fortín Jayucubás.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

The Paraguayan flag being raised in Fortín Zenteno, former Bolivian Fortín Alihuatá.

(Editor's collection)

President Ayala (center) paying one of his usual visits to General Headquarters in the Chaco.

On the same day also, the 29th, the Commander of the Third Army Corps reported to me that an officer belonging to the unit of the Argentine army which occupied Fortín Sorpresa Vieja had presented himself before the Commander of our small troop of occupation of Sorpresa Nueva requesting that we evacuate that post and deliver it to him. In the face of such an irritating attitude as that of the Argentine officer, who thus sought to give to his country some gratuitous participation in our recent great victory, the Paraguayan Commander replied that he, on his part, invited the Argentine army to evacuate Sorpresa Vieja, which improperly was occupied by it. In view of that unfavorable reception the Argentine officer retired without pressing further his demand.

On the 30th I received a report that the concentration of the Third Army Corps in Muñoz had been completed, a fact which must be noticed in order to comprehend the difficulties which we encountered in the matter of transports. The march on foot of that unit to Muñoz had been ordered immediately after the surrender of Campo Vía and terminated at the end of eighteen days, after having submitted our troops to tremendous hardships. As to the troops bound for the Toledo and Platanillos sectors, they continued their movement.

On January 1st, 1934, I made an intensive review of a new group of artillery, whose organization I had arranged and who were armed with the cannons taken from the enemy in Campo Vía. That armament was brand new, had been little used, and showed signs of little wear.

In a letter which I received the same day the President informed me that the diplomatic situation was not clarified and that he had determined to separate himself from the influence of the League of Nations which was resolutely inclined towards Bolivia. All the demands of the League were made at the expense of Paraguay. It is here worth noting the paradoxical result of the intervention of the League of Nations in the Chaco dispute. It intended to pacify but as a matter of fact it actively contributed to the prolongation of the war. Had it not been for the intervention of the League, peace could have been achieved at that time.

In the first days of January we gave the greatest possible impulse to the movement of troops which would constitute the new concentrations and to the opening of the road which would run directly from Coronel Hermosa (Carayá) to Platanillos, by which means we would accomplish the shortening by nearly one hundred kilometers of our line of communication towards the Platanillos region, and we would have more mobility once the armistice terminated. We also prosecuted diligently the construction of sheds, telephone lines, and dams for the collection of pluvial water.

On the 5th at 8 A.M. the Minister of Defense, Dr. Víctor Rojas, landed at my General Headquarters. Through him the President consulted me as to whether or not a new extension of the armistice would be advantageous to our army and what should be the securities that we might demand. Since by that time I had arrived at the conviction that the enemy did not desire peace but would possibly seek to gain time for subsequent military aims, it appeared to me that any new extension would no longer be a contribution toward bringing about a definite cessation of hostilities. Further, the new concentration of our forces approached its completion, and under those conditions there was no reason for playing the enemy's game and giving him time.

On the same day, then, I replied to the President that I saw no advantage in prolonging the armistice, and, with regard to the matter of securities, the Bolivian troops should retire to Villa Montes and to Roboré while our army should come to the littoral but should maintain the policing of all the private properties in the Chaco. In my judgment there would have been security with the retirement of both our armies upon the two opposite borders of the Chaco, but as we could not leave the interests of our great establishments without protection, it was just that their supervision should be in our charge.

On the 6th I received this very urgent message from the President at 6:30 P.M.:

> Prolongation of armistice not agreed upon. Plenipotentiary reports that there is a good hope for satisfactory solution. It appears that Bolivians accept already evacuation of the Chaco leaving the policing of the territory in our charge—but they insist upon port.[36] In view of the favorable diplomatic negotiations your Command might consider this circumstance in the execution of your plan of operations. If any pressure is necessary you will be advised accordingly.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala,
> President of the Republic.

The Bolivians were prostrated by a disaster which had physically swept all their army from the Chaco. Triumphant Paraguay consented to abandon that territory, recovered at the price of un-

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[36] The obtaining of an outlet on the Paraguay River at Bahía Negra (see Map No. 1) or below—preferably below—was a *conditio sine qua non* consistently demanded by Bolivia for any settlement of the Chaco controversy, but it was as consistently rejected by Paraguay. Usually it was referred to as the "port" issue.

(Editor's collection)

Ruins of the Bolivian Fortín Bolívar.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Paraguayan soldiers on the attack.

heard of sacrifices, in order to give Bolivia the opportunity to put an end to the struggle under honorable conditions. Bolivia, nevertheless, refused to reciprocate our chivalrous conduct by raising an absurd demand. Vanquished Bolivia presumed to dictate impositions upon victorious Paraguay—amazing inversion of rôles in which it is easy to trace the temperamental influence of President Salamanca. But, be it as it may, the attitude of Bolivia revealed her determination to continue the fight, to wage, as it were, war for the sake of war, with blind aberration, since, after Campo Vía, she could not seriously foster any hope of taking the Chaco by force.

The above-mentioned presidential communication, on the other hand, placed my command in a rather embarrassing position because it made the progress of military operations, by then fully developed, contingent upon diplomatic negotiations of whose success there were already reasons to doubt in view of the Bolivian demand. I do not say that military operations should not synchronize with diplomatic negotiations; both, in the last analysis, are means to the same end. But in that particular case there was little or nothing to be hoped from the diplomatic negotiations, so that to mitigate our military effort on their account was probably to permit the enemy to save definitely the rest of his units that had escaped from the recent catastrophe, in order to build a new army and continue the war.

On that day, the 6th, I advised all the commanders of the different Army Corps and the Commander of Bahía Negra that hostilities would recommence at midnight and that they must continue the operations in accord with the instructions which I had previously sent to them.

Thus the hope that we had reposed in the intervention of the League of Nations was shattered. By the clumsy handling of their negotiations they wasted an excellent opportunity to bring the war to an end at the beginning of 1934. Far from exercising a moderating influence upon the two belligerents, the policy employed by the League contributed in good measure to enhance the Bolivian pretensions, and, as a consequence, to continue the struggle, because, while such pretensions prevailed, Paraguay saw her own existence in danger. The League later committed errors still more irritating, which eventually forced our country to withdraw from Geneva.

Withal, the most important lesson learned by Paraguay with that failure was the realization that Bolivia occupied in the diplomatic arena a position much higher than our own. Our international influence was not augmented in any way by our resounding victory, whilst that of the Bolivians was not diminished. If we had had, as I pointed out at the beginning of these Memoirs, that inter-association of interests which makes friends and gives a true importance to a country, Campo Vía would have been an argument of sufficient weight to terminate the war with a definite acknowledgment of our rights over the Chaco. The mediators, who never rested a minute, would have undertaken to convince Bolivia of the hopelessness of her attempt to dispute this territory with Paraguay. But nobody would believe that which was obvious to all, namely, the surprising fact that Paraguay, a poor country, little recognized, could assert her personality in such a strong manner. It appeared to everybody a mere casual accident. Here lay the true cause of the failure of the negotiations which followed Campo Vía. That signified that if the position had been reversed, that is, if Bolivia had crushed Paraguay, no one would have moved a finger to save us. Beyond our frontiers everyone desired to be "realistic." The big fish always swallows the little fish and it would have been in the nature of things that Bolivia should swallow Paraguay. *The Paraguayan statesmen of the future must learn from this experience and give to our country the position that she should occupy in order that she may be heard and taken into consideration.*

On January 6th the President forwarded to me a telegram from the Military Adviser of our delegation in Buenos Aires which said in part:

> The Minister of War [of Argentina] intimated to me that his Government demanded the abandonment [of Fortín Sorpresa Vieja] by the Bolivians six months ago, stating that the said territory was Argentine, and that the Bolivians abandoned it. The Minister says that if now they deliver it to us Bolivia would allege that that demand was made with a deliberate purpose to favor us. He asks that in order to avoid future friction our troops should evacuate Sorpresa Nueva without prejudice to any better right. He assures me that the occupation by Argentine troops would not embarrass if military necessities required us to operate in the said places, &c., &c.

At the foot of that dispatch the President added:

> In view of the nature of this matter I desire that the Command advise me upon the case taking into account the affected interests and advising me as soon as possible.

Confronted with such an extraordinary imposition of the Argentine Government, the first step that I took was to ask the Commander of the troops operating in the region concerned what information he possessed regarding the date of the occupation of Sorpresa Vieja by the Argentine army. The Commander replied on the 8th:

> Fortín Sorpresa Vieja has been occupied by the Argentines for one month and some days. The impression of this Command is that they will keep this *fortín* and continue to penetrate our territory.

So, it was not true that Sorpresa Vieja was occupied by the Argentine army six months before as affirmed by the Argentine Minister of War. The occupation by then had lasted only one month and some days, that is, since the Bolivians had fled from the *fortín* because of their defeat at Campo Vía. Needless to say, I was much affected by that verification. On the same day I replied to the President:

> I consider that the situation involving the Pilcomayo *fortines* is very delicate because the Argentine Government evidently is incorrectly informed. There is no reason for counselling the evacuation by our troops of Fortín Sorpresa Nueva, founded in our territory by Bolivian usurpation and abandoned by the enemy as a consequence of his defeat in the Battle of Zenteno. In order to avoid eventual friction the Argentine troops must abandon Fortín Sorpresa Vieja which they have occupied only one month and some days commencing with the enemy defeat in the said Battle of Zenteno.

The Paraguayan Commander of the region had the impression that the Argentines would continue to occupy the other Paraguayan *fortines* in the Pilcomayo zone which were left ungarrisoned because of the advance of our army; for which reason on the same day, the 8th, I asked that there be dispatched from Asunción troops of marines to occupy our *fortines* General Brúguez, General Delgado, and Salto Palmares. The Minister of Defense informed me on the 11th that the necessary steps had been taken.

CHAPTER XI

In Front of Ballivian

The failure of transports, as always, at the termination of the armistice, impeded our army from taking any possible advantage of its excellent strategic situation. If at that time we had been in condition to give to our movements the impetus that circumstances demanded by the employment of means of sufficient mobility, there is no doubt that the war would have been shortened. The Bolivian army would have been unable to reorganize in the Chaco.

Our troops renewed their movements on the 7th and occupied *fortines* Loa, Jayucubás and Platanillos, deserted by the enemy. They also made a new advance towards Camacho, towards La China and towards Esteros and Magariños. Nevertheless the torrential rains of those days considerably retarded our movements.

On the 8th we occupied Fortín Esteros and on that night we entered Camacho. The rains continued with the same force.

On the 13th an airplane arrived from Asunción bringing me a letter from the President. The Chief Magistrate told me that it would be favorable to our interests to abandon Fortín Sorpresa Nueva. Despite the distressing impression that the Argentine attitude made upon me, I had to obey the presidential order, to which effect I gave the pertinent instructions to the Commander of the Third Army Corps.

The Bolivians, in the meantime, broadcast a communiqué, significant because it expressed much hope that Paraguay would accept a new armistice and indicated that possibly peace was not distant. As we see, in Bolivia there existed always an intense desire to bring the war to an end—but the war continued because of the obstinacy of President Salamanca.

Our advances progressed in all sectors, but with the rains which reduced still more the capacity of our transports, we were compelled to resort to a dangerous procedure in order to harass the enemy. The enemy continued to retreat over successive positions and in order to maintain our contact and to give him the impression of an efficient pursuit—which actually we could not undertake—we dispatched towards him small detachments at a great distance from our main body. Thus we prevented the possibility of the enemy withdrawing troops from other sectors in order to co-operate in the area of our principal attack. In that manner our Third

Army Corps arrived on January 16th 25 kilometers to the west of the Bolivian Puesto Catán, and on the 18th made contact with the enemy 31 kilometers from Catán and proceeded as far as 35 kilometers to the west of that post.

In the sector of La China our advance encountered still greater obstacles. The region was densely wooded and the roads were full of deep muddy ruts. The mud of the Chaco is so slippery that it gives one the impression that it is made of butter and it is impossible even to walk upon it.

On the 19th the Commander of our Second Army Corps reported to me that one of his distant patrols, detached by the road which runs from Camacho to the northwest, had taken Palmar Ustares, 31 kilometers northwest of Camacho.

At 9 A.M. on the 20th the President arrived at Villa Militar by plane. In my diary of that date I have the following note:

> In conversation referring to the diplomatic situation the President stated to me that the Government is and will be inflexible on the point of not submitting to arbitration the Hayes Zone and the littoral of the Paraguay River.

I again requested from the President the necessary trucks to accelerate our military operations, and he replied that this request could not be fulfilled for two months. In view of that fact I stated that in our advance beyond La China we could reach, at most, Cabezón. The President returned to Asunción on the 21st.

On the 22nd the Commander of Bahía Negra informed me of an encounter by one of our patrols with a Bolivian patrol, 17 kilometers to the northwest of Fortín Galpón. The enemy patrol took flight and left in our hands some equipment.

On the 23rd, according to the report of the Commander of our Third Army Corps, the enemy made a reconnaissance in force upon our line in the Magariños sector, but was repulsed with severe losses. One of his battalions was utterly destroyed.

While the rest of the Bolivian troops was making a general retreat which we could not embarrass by any dashing and tenacious pursuit, I conceived the idea of taking Puerto Suárez in order to cut off the supply of the Bolivian troops in that region. Those troops were actually supplied from Brazilian territory. If we could intercept their communication with Brazil, not only would they be unable to remain where they were but they could fall into our hands because Bolivia could not supply them from Santa Cruz.

Consequently I decided to go personally to Bahía Negra to make the preparations, but I previously adopted all the necessary means for the attack and the taking of Fortín La China and for the close collaboration of all. On the morning of the 24th I went by air to Muñoz and from there by automobile to Puesto Correa, where I

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Paraguayan soldiers firing in the Ballivián front.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Paraguayan trenches in the Ballivián front.

had appointed a rendezvous with the Commander of the Third Army Corps and his divisional commanders. I explained to them my intentions, which can be summarized as follows:

Cover ourselves with the Second Army Corps—which was the least numerous—on the side of Camacho; direct the principal effort of our pursuit by the center from Platanillos in the direction of Ballivián with the First Army Corps; and accompany that movement of pursuit with the Third Army Corps along the Pilcomayo River.

The following day I passed to Platanillos, where I summoned with the same purpose the Commander of the First Army Corps and his divisional commanders. I impressed upon them emphatically the necessity for giving the greatest rapidity to our movement. On the same day the advanced troops of the Second Army Corps had arrived within 70 kilometers to the northwest of Camacho, upon the road to Picuiba[37] where the enemy at that time maintained very few troops. All that area, then, was free. If we had had at our disposal sufficient free trucks, we could have arrived with impunity at Carandayty, behind the entire defensive system of the enemy.

I returned to Villa Militar on the 23rd. There I was advised by the Commander of the First Army Corps by telephone that his operation upon La China would begin the following Sunday, the 28th.

On the 27th I left for Puerto Casado and embarked upon the gunboat *Paraguay* for Bahía Negra, where I arrived the following day, at 4:15 A.M. I noted in my diary of that day:

> All the officers came aboard to salute me, and I invited them to disembark and pay the tribute of one minute of silence to the memory of Col. José Julián Sánchez, who was killed by a bomb from an enemy airplane in the past year.

After that ceremony I proceeded to the Headquarters of the garrison, where I informed the chief thereof, Col. Nicolás Delgado, of my plans as well as of the preparatory dispositions which had to be taken forthwith for the attack upon Puerto Suárez. Among the officers of Bahía Negra the most lively enthusiasm existed with the announcement of the prospective operation.

On the 29th, at 5 A.M., I left in a truck for Fortín Galpón and rapidly reviewed the garrisons of *fortines* Comandante Jiménez and Patria. The defensive works of Galpón did not appear to me to be satisfactory, and I ordered some modifications. I returned to Bahía Negra after the middle of the day and embarked for my return to Puerto Casado at 10 o'clock on that night.

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[37] When I say *Picuiba* I refer to the enemy Fortín *Paucarpata*, situated on the banks of the lagoon called *Picuiba* by the Bolivians. Throughout the course of the war the name Picuiba was always used for the Bolivian *fortín* by the lagoon of the same name. Afterwards we gave it the name of *Nueva Asunción* because it fell into our hands on August 15th of that year, the anniversary of the foundation of our capital city.—J.F.E.

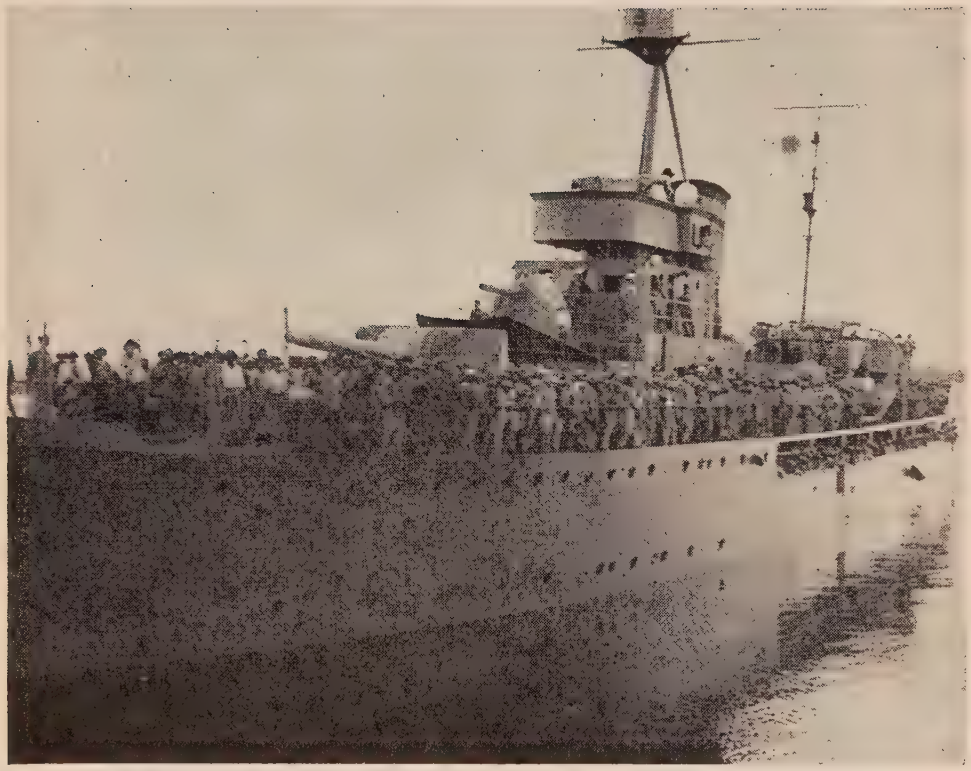
On that same day General Headquarters informed me that the troops of the First Army Corps had outflanked one of the wings of the advanced positions of the enemy in La China and that the enemy had retired upon another position. I arrived at Puerto Casado on the 30th and reported this fact to Asunción. According to telephonic advice from General Headquarters the preparations for intercepting the road of the enemy between La China and Cabezón were terminated. On the night of that day I arrived at Villa Militar.

Unfortunately I had very soon to cast away the idea of undertaking an operation upon Puerto Suárez. Of course, the most powerful obstacle was the inevitable problem of transport, but this time it was aggravated by an additional complication, which I shall explain presently.

Between Bahía Negra and Puerto Suárez the terrain shows special characteristics. It is extensively inundated during the rainy season, which existed at the present time. In order to provide proper service for supply and general evacuation between Bahía Negra and Fortín Galpón, it was necessary to employ a large number of canoes which we did not possess in sufficient quantities. When the dry season arrived, the Negro and the Verde rivers were not navigable even for the smallest boats and consequently service had to be by land in trucks. We had also to undertake some engineering projects.

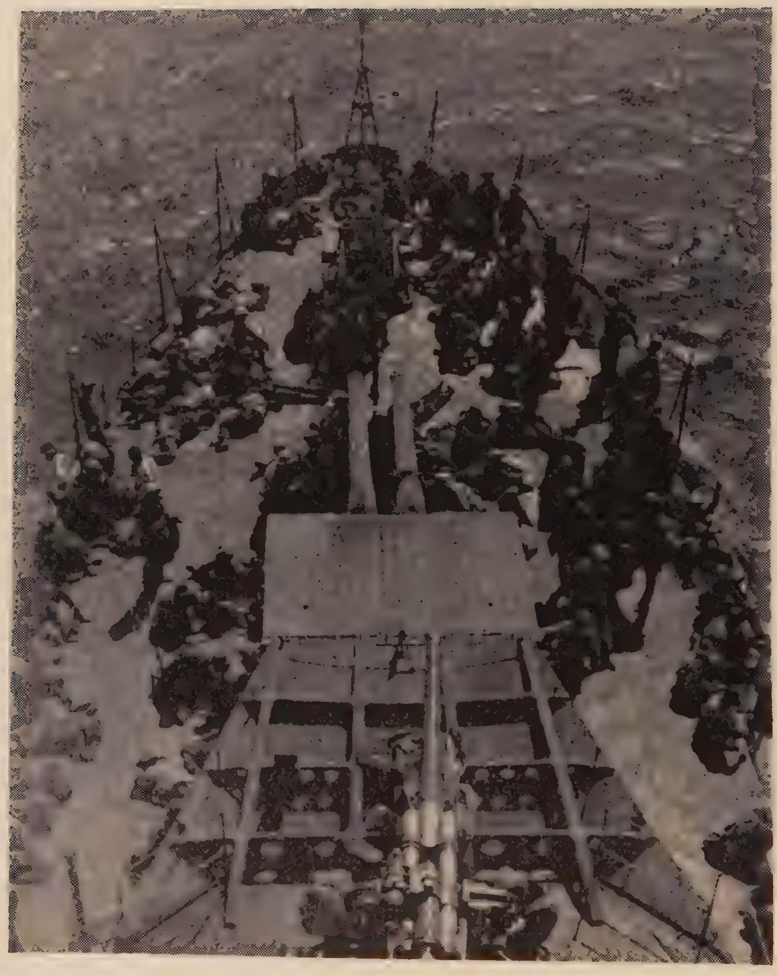
In an expedition against Puerto Suárez, over a stretch approximately 200 kilometers long, we could not count upon any supplies other than those coming from Bahía Negra. Bolivia could supply herself in that area directly from Brazilian territory, but we, lacking in Brazil the influence of our opponents, had no certainty of enjoying the same courtesy. Thus we should perforce have to depend for supplies upon Bahía Negra across territory entirely within the Chaco.

Immediately to the north of Fortín Galpón there is a broad depression through the bottom of which runs the river which we call *Verde* and which the Bolivians call *Negro* or *Otuquis*. This depression is interrupted by the hills of Vitriones which stand out like two breasts, at the foot of which is the Bolivian *fortín* of the same name. Beyond Vitriones the terrain, covered with woods, begins to rise and presents the same difficulties as the rest of the Chaco for mechanical transport.



(Benjamín Banks' collection)

The Paraguayan gunboat *Humaitá* full of soldiers bound for the Chaco.



(Benjamín Banks' collection)

The gunboat *Paraguay* transporting troops to the Chaco.

After studying all the factors involved I arrived at the conclusion that in order to accomplish the projected operation, it would necessitate at least 100 canoes and 200 trucks, a number which at that time appeared to be beyond our reach. The canoes would have to be constructed rapidly and we were not prepared for that. With regard to the trucks we could not even think of taking 200 of them away from the principal theater of operations where we did not have enough trucks for our most pressing requirements. Further, we should have to bring to Bahía Negra more troops, more armaments, artillery, and even planes, all of which elements we did not have in adequate quantities at our disposal.

Unquestionably the thought of reaching Puerto Suárez was seductive. By that stroke we could isolate all the Bolivian troops operating in the north which would have produced a profound moral effect. But I found myself momentarily compelled to desist for the reasons above explained.

On the principal front, on January 31st, the movement commenced upon La China, a position which, according to our aviators, was organized as a redoubt. In the Magariños sector an active struggle of patrols occurred. Towards Picuiba our patrols made contact with the enemy. On February 1st I noted in my diary the following:

> The Ministry of Defense advises me that Bolivia has rejected our condition to exclude from arbitration the zone awarded by President Hayes[38] and the littoral of the Paraguay River and that the Government insisted in its attitude of refusing to include both this zone and the littoral in any arbitral proceedings. From this information there is nothing to be hoped for the moment from diplomacy.

On February 3rd at 4 P.M. our First Army Corps with an entire division intercepted the road from La China to Cabezón, suddenly appearing 12 kilometers to the west of La China. But our other troops which operated by the south encountered much difficulty and progressed very slowly, for which reason we could not accomplish the closing of the circle, and the Bolivian defenders of La China escaped by the southwest through paths opened in the neighboring woods. La China fell into our hands the same day.

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[38] In 1876 a controversy between Paraguay and Argentina with regard to the ownership of a part of the Chaco territory was referred to President Rutherford B. Hayes, of the United States, for arbitration. President Hayes awarded the territory in dispute to Paraguay declaring that Paraguay "has legal and just title" to it. The territory awarded to Paraguay was included within that invaded by Bolivia, and Paraguay, in all negotiations to settle her quarrel with Bolivia, maintained that the zone adjudicated by President Hayes should be excluded from any arbitration since it belonged to Paraguay according to a legal decision which could not be abrogated.—J.F.E. (See note 1, *supra, Preliminary Reminiscences.*)

Once again the road to Ballivián was entirely opened, and once again we had to lose a precious opportunity because of the failure of means of transport. In that moment we were actually without telephones, and I could not learn in detail the operations and movements which had been performed.

On the 5th there was a new retreat of the enemy in contact with our forces beyond La China. Our troops went as far as La China Nueva, another enemy position towards the west which also fell into our power. But despite the continual recession of the enemy before our push, I realized that these superb efforts of our brave soldiers could not go on indefinitely, and under that impression I telegraphed the same day to the Ministry of Defense:

> Our pursuit of the enemy defeated in La China unfortunately will be limited. Already we have reached the utmost limit that it is possible for our means of transport to render.

On the 6th the retreat of the enemy continued towards Cabezón. According to the declaration of prisoners they did not exceed three regiments. Our troops pursued slowly and at the price of heavy sacrifices.

On the 7th we captured the Bolivian Puesto Tortuga situated 13 kilometers to the west of La China. There the enemy had burned his ammunition stores and supply stations. Our troops proceeded nearly 4 kilometers more towards the west.

That day I forwarded to the Ministry of Defense the following open report:

> In Fortín Jordán [a post situated to the southwest of La China and through which the defeated troops of La China passed] we collected some automatic arms, heavy and light, 45 cases of artillery projectiles, a great quantity of mortar grenades, an immense sanitary station, and an infinity of equipment of all classes. Numerous soldiers continue to present themselves, those being the remains of the units dispersed in the woods. Those prisoners declare that a great number of their companions have perished, principally from thirst. All the road covered by the enemy in his retirement is strewn with corpses, and some of them burned—killed by their officers because they refused to continue the march. We aided several soldiers who were still alive.

On the 7th the Ministry of Defense advised me that on the previous day our Government had presented to the Commissioners of the League of Nations a proposition consisting of a demand for security as a previous condition to entering negotiations of arbitration, and the Commissioners of the League had expressed their fear that Bolivia would not accept that condition. I commented in my diary, "I consider that this proposition, even if it were accepted by Bolivia, would not solve the dispute, but that it would

(Editor's collection)

Marshal Estigarribia looking from an observation post in the Ballivián front.

weigh heavily upon the country and later oblige us to resume the war."

On the previous day the Ministry of Defense had informed me about the apprehension that the negotiations with the Commissioners of the League of Nations, in the course of that week, might reach an "absolute impasse." Thereupon I directed to the Ministry a note, "explaining roughly," as I entered in my diary on February 7th, "the military situation and emphasizing in a conclusive manner the necessity for providing the army without delay with the trucks previously requested."

I quote here some other entries in my diary on February 7th:

> I have the impression that the Government, as always, hoping for peace does not desire to make the necessary sacrifice [the purchase of trucks] and consequently we shall waste the new victory obtained as we have partly wasted the previous one [Campo Vía]. . . .
>
> The strategic surprise achieved in La China may give us great possibilities for destroying the enemy army with relative ease.

On the 8th our drive towards Cabezón continued nothwithstanding the opposition of small detachments of enemy troops. In the Pilcomayo sector we established close contact with a line that the enemy had constructed in front of Magariños. After having pushed the enemy back from La China under the conditions described, I suggested to the Commander of our Third Army Corps, which operated upon the Pilcomayo River, that he maintain close contact with the enemy troops in his sector, though I was well aware of the difficulties of all kinds that his unit was encountering.

I desired thus, in accord with my plan of operation, to detain the enemy so that we should have, if possible, sufficient time to arrive by the side of Cabezón at a place which would permit us to cut off his retreat.

On the 9th our troops encountered, before Cabezón, a more serious resistance on the part of the enemy. The Commander of the Third Army Corps reported that he had attacked during all that day the enemy positions in his sector (Magariños). On the 10th the troops of the Third Army Corps broke the Bolivian line, and at 9 A.M. they entered Fortín Magariños. From there they advanced 5 kilometers more to the west. In the Cabezón sector they had caused the enemy to make a new retirement upon another position.

Meanwhile I was as ever intensely concerned about the trucks. I noted in my diary on the 11th: "I ordered the liaison officer, Col. Zúñiga, to proceed by plane to Asunción in order to explain the military situation and the urgent necessity for the 500 trucks solicited."

That day the Commander of the Third Army Corps reported that he had occupied Laguna, a post situated 14 kilometers to the northwest of Magariños, where there existed a landing field. The troops of the First Army Corps were deploying to attack the positions of Cabezón and to make close contact on every side.

On the 12th our First Army Corps took Cabezón at 11 P.M. Accordingly, I wrote in my diary: "We have reached the limit of advance permitted by our means of transport. Compelled to suspend the offensive by lack of trucks. What a pity!" On the same day I sent instructions to the Commander of the Third Army Corps, whose difficulties of transport in general I knew well, that he must make every effort to keep in contact with the fleeing enemy, following him with detachments thrown forward but at some distance, and try to establish connection with our First Army Corps which was operating more to the north.

In order to give an idea of the panic that possessed Bolivia I have to record the fact that by that time they had ordered the evacuation of the civilian population of Villa Montes, Tarija, and Villazón, points situated hundreds of kilometers from the front of operations. But our army, far from menacing those localities, was hardly in a position to pursue the enemy.

In those days a great problem arose with regard to the supply of our troops on the march. With the prolongation of our lines of communications it became impossible to convey fresh meat to the soldiers. Up to that time cattle consumed by the army were driven close behind it and were actually slaughtered in the line of fire. When we had not sufficient water supply in the line, the cattle were killed in places nearest to the troops and the meat was carried in trucks. In the Chaco meat could be preserved for only ten hours at most, after which decomposition set in, mainly in summer. Such is the quantity of flies that swarm when they smell fresh meat and such is the size of them that they devour the meat and spoil it in no time. For that reason when we had to supply fresh meat to a distant troop, the animals had to be killed at dawn in order to take advantage of the coolness of the morning, and the meat had to be transported immediately to the place of consumption where it had to arrive by the middle of the day and no later.

With the extension of our communications the driving of cattle behind the troops on the march was out of the question because of the lack of water supply and of pasture and further because we had had not trucks in sufficient quantities. Therefore our heroic troops had to suffer indescribable privations in their pursuit of the enemy. They lived entire weeks solely upon hardtack and *yerba-maté*[39] and consequently scurvy spread among them in dreadful proportions. This scourge did not cease until we dominated the Carandayty region, where we again found livestock. We resorted to the preparation of jerked beef for the army but it did not prevent the scurvy.

Although the enemy was in full retreat, our army had reached the utmost limit of its possibilities. As a consequence of the herculean effort to which it had been submitted in that endless wilderness, our effectives thinned out. Many soldiers were ill and others went on furlough to a well-merited rest. Some of our chiefs were greatly worried by this condition of impotence. One of them telegraphed to me in grief stating that the forces at his disposal could *never* permit him to operate upon Ballivián. That was on February 3rd.

Confronted by all those difficulties I conceived the idea of laying down a direct road which would run from Camacho to Cururendá. In that manner we could shorten our lines of communications as we had already done with the road from Coronel Hermosa (Carayá) to Platanillos, and we could make good, if only partially, the failure of means of mobility. The President had warned me that two months must pass before we could count upon more trucks. But in the meantime something had to be done to strike the enemy. A road from Camacho to Cururendá, where the Argentine frontier bordering the Pilcomayo River ends, would allow us to act upon the lines of communications of the enemy.

On February 13th I transmitted the following instructions to the Commander of our Third Army Corps, operating in Magariños:

> Once you have reached in your advance the limit afforded by your means of transport, and in view of the fact that for the moment it is impossible to assign more trucks to you, please maintain your troops in joint formation, as handy as possible and in accordance with the most probable hypothesis, and send out detachments of exploration not less than one squadron each, if possible mounted, with the object, first of all, of locating the new enemy position, which is of first importance for our joint dispositions, and establish at the same time contact with the First Army Corps by the shortest road.

On the 14th I sent similar instructions to the First Army Corps, operating on the Cabezón-Ballivián line:

> Suspend momentarily your offensive for the purpose of giving rest to your troops and organize and recomplete the effectives of the units. It is of the utmost importance for our joint resolutions to find out at what place the

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[39] *Yerba-maté*, or simply *maté*, is a native tea concocted with the roasted and crushed leaves of a Paraguayan tree *(Ilex Paraguaiensis)*. It is a very popular beverage in the countries of the Río de la Plata Valley, and a ration of *maté* was an indispensable part of the daily ration of the Paraguayan soldier.

enemy will make new resistance. Strong detachments of exploration should have charge of that mission. It is indispensable to make every necessary effort in order to establish connection with the Third Army Corps and if possible open a *picada* for this purpose.

The foregoing measures were tantamount to an acknowledgment of our failure to reach Ballivián rapidly. Another procedure, then, had to be decided upon in order to secure the sought-for result.

I did not discard the possibility that the enemy might organize anew his resistance a little more or less along a line from Campo Jurado to Linares, rallying upon it his two retreating columns. It would have been a logical measure on his part, and in anticipation I ordered the connection of our First and Third Army Corps. But further I had an interest in retarding as much as possible his retreat from the area where we were now carrying out our pursuit, so that we should have time to open the projected path from Camacho to Cururendá. Unfortunately the idea of acting upon the internal communications of the Bolivians by this path was bound to fail, as we shall see later. No sooner had our troops established close contact with the positions successively occupied by the enemy in order to cover his retreat than the retirement continued; and then, despite all our precautions, the Bolivian aviators discovered the location of our road to Cururendá.

On the 15th at 9 A.M. the President arrived by air at my P.C. I submitted for his approval my new plan, already in full execution, concerning the opening of the road to Cururendá. The President approved without objection.[40]

On the 16th the detachments thrown forward by the Third Army Corps got in contact with the enemy 12 kilometers to the west of Laguna, and those of the First Army Corps 20 kilometers to the west of Cabezón. Some torrential rains which fell at that time favored the work upon the road to Cururendá because our sappers, who had no water, drank from the pools created by the rains; but on the other fronts the rains impeded all movements.

The President returned to Asunción on the 18th.

On the 21st I made a journey to visit the commanders of the different Army Corps in order personally to confirm the preparatory orders which I had transmitted to them by telephone, and further to make perfectly clear my intentions. I arrived first at Toledo, the Headquarters of the Second Army Corps. The Commander informed me that the path to Cururendá had reached

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[40] The only roads then existing were that from Campo Jurado to Alurralde, and the one from Ballivián through Cururendá to Villa Montes, along the banks of the Pilcomayo River.—J.F.E.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

A group of Bolivian war prisoners.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Another group of Bolivian war prisoners.

already to within 60 kilometers of Camacho. I placed before him in definite shape the mission of the Second Army Corps. Then I left for La China, but before we arrived at El Cruce the Bolivian aviators discovered our group and pursued us tenaciously. On the other hand, the roads were dreadful on account of the recent rains. We arrived at El Cruce after nightfall and there we spent the night.

On the following day we proceeded to La China, the Headquarters of the Commander of the First Army Corps. I explained to the Commander of this unit the mission that was necessary for his troops. I ordered that the Second Army Corps should be reinforced with the division of my General Reserve. Afterwards I departed for Margariños and I passed the night 70 kilometers to the south of El Cruce. On the following day I continued my journey to Las Perlas, a point situated six kilometers from Magariños and where the Commander of the Third Army Corps had his stations. Here, after having made a hasty trip as far as Toba Quemado, I gave the necessary instructions to the Commander of the corps and to his divisional commanders.

I reached Villa Militar on the 25th, where I found a letter from the President in which he announced to me that the League of Nations had presented to the Government a proposition of peace and enumerated its principal points. I deemed that proposition, as stated in my diary at the time, to be the best that had been formulated up to date.[41]

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[41] That proposal was the draft for a complete treaty of peace. It was submitted to the parties concerned by Sr. Álvarez del Vayo from Buenos Aires on February 22, 1934. A brief summary follows:

1) Cessation of hostilities within twenty-four hours;
2) Within forty-five days, withdrawal of the Bolivian army to Villa Montes and Roboré, and of the Paraguayan army to the banks of the Paraguay River;
3) Demobilization of part of the two armies within a term of three months;
4) Limitation of the standing armies to five thousand men for each of the two belligerent countries, pending the solution of the main controversy existing between them by the Permanent Court of International Justice;
5) During the time required by that Court to make its pronouncement, Bolivia will police a part of the Chaco, and Paraguay another part, but there will be a neutral zone in between—which neither party must police, in order to avoid clashes;
6) At the request of any of the parties, the Permanent Court of International Justice will have jurisdiction to decide the main controversy, and, in order to facilitate that task, both parties will not insist upon some of their previous reservations;
7) Repatriation of prisoners of war;
8) Eventual call of an international conference by the Pan American Union designed to study the co-ordination of the geographic and economic factors that may contribute to a better development and prosperity of the two countries.

On the 26th the advanced patrols of our Second Army Corps, which had been detached towards Picuiba, came to grips for the first time with the enemy in the neighborhood of Cañada Tarija. Thus the enemy made known to us the commencement of his activities in that region. The same day our First Army Corps made contact with an enemy position 27 kilometers to the west of Cabezón and our Third Army Corps in the vicinity of Linares.

On the 27th a report from the Second Army Corps informed me that some Bolivian planes had discovered the road to Cururendá, in the construction of which, up to that time, we had worked under cover. Some machines, in low flights, had followed the direction of the path.

That discovery, as well as the behavior of the enemy in the sectors of our First and Third Army Corps and the assembly of Bolivian troops in Cañada Tarija, convinced me that he would not make any decided defense along the Campo Jurado-Linares line. I entered in my diary on February 28th: "I am almost certain that the enemy will not defend himself along the Campo Jurado-Linares line."

In the first days of March the enemy continued his retreat in the sectors of our First and Third Army Corps and inaugurated his countermeasures in order to neutralize the danger which might accrue from our road towards Cururendá, which already had 150 kilometers of extension. With this object the enemy accumulated forces first in the Guachalla region and afterwards in Alurralde, and transported troops to the Garrapatal region.

On March 3rd the Commander of the Third Army Corps informed me that his troops had entered Tres Pozos and Linares, which had been abandoned by the enemy on the previous day.

Facing the material impossibility of exploiting the favorable situation which we had created in the Linares region, because we had no means of moving speedily the main body of the Third Army Corps in fighting conditions, and since, in addition, the series of countermeasures adopted by the enemy showed a change in the general situation, I ordered on the 4th a reconnaissance in force by the First Army of the new enemy position in its sector, which, according to the opinion of its commander, was strong.

On the 5th I made a rapid journey by air to make known to the commanders of the different Army Corps the recent change in the situation and to impart to them upon the terrain itself the appropriate instructions rendered necessary by such change. At 7:15 A.M. my plane landed in Laguna, where the Commander of the Third Army Corps received me. With him I went by automobile to Linares. On the way our automobile passed over a mine planted by the Bolivians, which did not explode. Linares was, as we know, one of the points from which the Bolivian army received supplies from Argentine territory.

The following day I left by plane for Platanillos where I explained to the Commander the general situation and gave him some instructions, and then I proceeded by automobile[42] to Camacho, Headquarters of the Second Army Corps and where there was as yet no landing field. With the Commander of the Second Army Corps and his divisional commanders we discussed the same points as those considered in the other corps.

I returned to General Headquarters on the 7th. According to a report of that day the advanced guards of the Third Army Corps had reached to within 25 kilometers of La Señora. The enemy continued to retreat in front of the First Army Corps. The First Army Corps was 29 kilometers to the west of Cabezón.

Despite the fact that a change in the general situation was outlined, we continued our preparations for the action upon Cururendá without interruption. We assembled in Camacho 1,000 mules anticipating the ample employment of transports on the backs of these animals.

Meanwhile the Bolivian retreat continued mainly along the Pilcomayo River, in the sector of the Third Army Corps whose advanced guards by March 9th had reached a point beyond Buenos Aires. The information referring to the accumulation of enemy troops in Garrapatal increased more and more. Thereupon I resolved to make a new tour along the front in order to obtain direct impressions upon the terrain and to determine the conduct which would be advisable to follow. The Ministry of Defense had informed me that the trucks requested would not arrive before April, and I had to reckon with that circumstance before making any determination.

On the 12th I left for Camacho, whence I proceeded to Palmar Ustares, where I passed the night. On the 13th I went even farther and reached the advanced guards. I inspected the organization of the terrain which was then in execution. Afterwards I returned to Camacho, thence to Jayucubás, where I was awaited by the Commander of the First Army Corps whom I made acquainted with all the works in charge of the Second Army Corps, and I gave him instructions to the effect that he should better harmonize his unit with the Third Army Corps. Further, I gave him some directions regarding the conduct which his corps must observe in case the Second Army Corps arrived upon the enemy road to Capiírendá. I emphasized the necessity for him to speed the advance of his troops towards Las Conchas-Ballivián with all the means at his command.

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[42] That day the air was much disturbed and I suggested to the aviators who accompanied me that they should wait until the following day to return to Villa Militar, but they undertook the flight the same day and one of the planes suffered an accident which cost the life of Captain Caballero Álvarez.—J.F.E.

During that journey I became persuaded that a previous operation should be undertaken upon the enemy detachment of Garrapatal, but I did not order the discontinuance of the works towards Cururendá, because the idea that I had in mind could be at most delayed in its application but should not be dropped.

On the 14th I returned from Jayucubás to Villa Militar. The troops of the First Army Corps had arrived to within 31 kilometers west of Cabezón, and those of the Third Army Corps had made contact with a new line of defense of the enemy. At my General Headquarters the Chief of the Information Office presented to me a resumé of information which showed the formation of a new great enemy unit in the Guachalla-D'Orbigny region. In my diary I wrote: "This information created a new expectation with reference to the work of the Second Army Corps."

From the 15th it was also clear that the enemy was constructing a road which, starting from Garrapatal, ran first towards the southwest and then in straight line towards the south, with the intention, without doubt, of cutting the path of our Second Army Corps towards Cururendá. By the 17th that information was fully confirmed.

In that period the commanders of our First and Third Army Corps reported that they were in contact, in their respective zones, with extensive enemy lines in organized positions, which appeared to indicate that at last the enemy would establish himself strongly upon a line probably extending towards the southwest from Campo Jurado[43] to the Pilcomayo River. If that fact were to be confirmed, it would greatly facilitate the realization of our plan of action more to the north with our Second Army Corps upon the Bolivian line of communications. I ordered the Commander of the First Army Corps to seek the north wing of the enemy position at his front and to scout the terrain in order to cut the road which ran from Campo Jurado to Villa Montes parallel with the road from Ballivián to Villa Montes. I also ordered him to trace a path which, when widened later, would permit us to supply the Second Army Corps, whose mission was, as we know, to emerge behind the enemy communications more to the north.

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[43] *Campo Jurado* means, in Spanish, a field upon which an oath was taken. It is said that that place received the name of Campo Jurado because the Bolivians had sworn not to retreat from there, after the numerous retirements which they had made before our advance.—J.F.E.

With relation to the presence and conduct of the enemy in Garrapatal I directed the following communication to the Commander of the Second Army Corps on the 17th:

> Assuming that we have previously to destroy the troops of the enemy's Ninth Division[44] prior to the principal projected operation, please make the necessary surveys preparatory for this action, and keep me informed of the progress thereof.

My resolution was to destroy the enemy who, a division strong, was assembling in Cañada Tarija, to the southeast of Garrapatal, with the object of suppressing or removing to a distance the danger which threatened us from that direction and to occupy speedily Garrapatal so as to distract from somewhere else thereto new enemy troops, a distraction which I hoped would be detrimental to the sector of Alurralde; to bring about forthwith a battle with our First and Third Army Corps in the Campo Jurado-Ballivián front, where, as we have just seen, the enemy would probably stand fast; and, finally, to throw our Second Army Corps upon Alurralde and, if possible, towards Cururendá in co-ordination with the other Army Corps.

From this time I held tenaciously to this scheme, regardless of the difficulties and setbacks which supervened; and eventually I applied it with success.

In the sector of our Third Army Corps the enemy commenced to display more activity. He made some reconnaissances in force upon our line but all were repulsed.

During this period of the operations the lack of aviation in our army was most severely felt. The few machines at our disposal could not fulfil our requirements in spite of the prodigious efforts of our aviators who really worked miracles. We were in a situation similar to that which preceded the appearance of the enemy upon Alihuatá Viejo at the beginning of March of the previous year. Virtually we could make no strategic reconnaissance, and there were numerous points concerning which we should collect useful information for the conduct of our operations. The enemy, on the other hand, employed a magnificent aviation service from whose vigilance it was difficult to escape. Because of that they discovered the location of our road from Camacho to Cururendá, a discovery which precluded us from carrying that operation to its full fruition.

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[44] These were the troops that occupied Garrapatal.—J.F.E.

CHAPTER XII

Canada Tarija—Canada Esperanza

On March 19th I called to my General Headquarters the Commander of the Second Army Corps and he arrived during the night of the same day. I made him acquainted with the latest information concerning the enemy in his zone of operations and I ordered him to accelerate his action against the enemy in Cañada Tarija, in accord with the plan outlined in the latter part of the preceding chapter. (See Map No. 5.)

In consequence, on the 22nd the Second Army Corps marched one of its divisions towards Palmar Santa Elena, which point it occupied on the 24th. On the 25th it continued its march upon Cañada Tarija. On the 26th it made contact with the Bolivian positions in that locality and inaugurated its movement upon them.

On the 27th our troops cut the only road of communication of the enemy behind Cañada Tarija. That was accomplished just after the Bolivians had received reinforcements, and by nightfall the Paraguayan division, after strong attacks, broke the Bolivian defenses and overran Cañada Tarija capturing its defenders with all their equipment. There fell into our power 8 officers and 1,200 enemy soldiers, besides considerable spoils of war—rifles, machine guns, trucks, hospital supplies, *et cetera.* Lt. Col. Angel C. Bavía, commander of the Bolivian detachment, was completely taken off guard by our maneuver upon his line of communication behind Cañada Tarija. In the beginning he believed that it was only an incursion of patrols, and, as we learned later, he did not attribute any greater importance to our movement. When he realized it and tried to react, it was too late. He was caught inside the iron ring of our forces, and all resistance was useless. In his desperation Lt. Col. Bavía attempted to commit suicide by shooting himself in the temple, but he did not die at once. A group of some 50 Bolivian soldiers endeavored to prevent their chief from falling into our hands, and they carried him, despite the gravity of his state, to an adjacent wood, where, on the 30th, they were all discovered and captured by our troops. Lt. Col. Bavía being entirely out of his mind was immediately carried to Camacho, where he received the most solicitous medical attention. He was operated upon on April 2nd but without result, and died on the 5th. I saw him on March 30th. He was lying on his stomach in his bed and from time to time he raised his head to make some incoherent remarks.

In the afternoon of the 28th we occupied Garrapatal, where we verified the construction by the enemy of a road which, leaving that point, stretched toward the path which we were constructing in the direction of Cururendá. The enemy road already extended for 18 kilometers, first towards the southwest and then directly to the south.

The objective assigned to the previous action of the troops of the Second Army Corps being attained by the taking of Cañada Tarija and Garrapatal, I left on the 30th for Camacho in order to inform myself rapidly of the situation and to make the dispositions which conditions demanded. Among the important information which I received on that journey was one referring to the lack of water, according to the prisoners captured, from Cañada Tarija to Carandayty. This meant that we enjoyed a relative safety in that region since the enemy could not bring substantial masses of troops through it. As far as we were concerned, notwithstanding the fact that we had once more opened the road toward the bases of the enemy, we were still less able than the enemy to move across that area in view of the insufficiency of our means of transport, which was as obstructive as ever.

The fall of Cañada Tarija and Garrapatal precipitated a professional misfortune to Col. Peña, the commander of the Bolivian Ninth Division and in charge of those positions. Col. Peña had his P.C. in Carandayty, some 300 kilometers from the scene of action, when the disaster occurred. The panic created by the reverse of Cañada Tarija and Garrapatal, as we learned afterwards, was such that on the 30th a Bolivian colonel named Goita fled from Picuiba, 100 kilometers from Garrapatal, taking with him his women and furniture and abandoning everything else.

In my diary on March 30th I made the following note:

> Believing that with the action of Cañada Tarija we have obtained the material and moral results which we sought I resolve to start the decisive movement upon Ballivián.[45] To this effect I gave a number of orders to the Commander of the Second Army Corps.

On the 31st I left Camacho for Cabezón, where I explained the general situation to the Commander of the First Army Corps and indicated to him the resolutions that I had taken respecting the movement of the Second Army Corps, pointing out at the same time the part to be played by his corps. I reiterated the urgency of opening a path through the wood which the unit of his command could employ in its northward movement in order to make contact with the Second Army Corps as soon as that corps succeeded in intercepting the enemy road to Villa Montes. As to the co-operation of the Third Army Corps, I had previously ordered that that unit should extend its deployment as far as the Cabezón-Ballivián road. In other words, that was a displacement of the entire First Army Corps towards the north in order to co-operate with the Second. Further, I sought to assure the supply of the Second Army Corps through the rapid widening of the path to be opened by the First Army Corps.

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[45] Movement of the plan which was outlined in the latter part of the preceding chapter.—J.F.E.

I returned to General Headquarters on April 1st. On the same day our patrols of the Second Army Corps had reached Siracuas, 50 kilometers to the north of Garrapatal.

I placed such faith in the success of the approaching operations and had such confidence that, if my plan worked satisfactorily, as then appeared feasible, the utter destruction of the enemy army could be attained, that I directed on April 2nd the following message to the Ministry of Defense with the object of accumulating the greatest possible quantity of equipment:

> In moments solemn and decisive for the termination of the war, with the definite crushing of the invader, I beg the Ministry of Defense to arouse all the fire of Paraguayan patriotism and to order that all able citizens included in the call for the national defense come to the front of operations to take arms. We need more men to complete our effectives. The approaching battle must be that of the entire Paraguayan nation standing up against the enemy.

On the 6th, a little after noon, the President arrived at my General Headquarters. I informed him of the general trend of operations and of the state of preparations for the coming battle. I believed at that time that if we could give battle in the manner conceived, the campaign would come to an end. The President appeared very much satisfied with my explanations and was lively interested in the speedy termination of the war. On the 8th he returned to Asunción.

On the 7th the Commander of the First Army Corps reported that the enemy troops on his front had retired during the previous night leaving in his power an organized position 12 kilometers in extension. Our troops had already advanced to within 3 kilometers to the west of Campo Jurado. The prisoners taken on that front informed us that the Second enemy Army Corps was proceeding towards the northwest by the road called Lóbrego[46] which extended from Campo Jurado to Villa Montes.

During the night of April 8th the enemy in front of our Third Army Corps resumed his retreat, and on the 9th the Commander of the same Army Corps reported that his troops had occupied Buenos Aires and Mistola without any fight on the part of the Bolivians.

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[46] The meaning of *Lóbrego* is lugubrious. The road certainly deserves the name.—J.F.E.

With those new retirements of the Bolivians our slow and laborious pursuit continued. As the direction of the retreat of the enemy Second Army Corps demonstrated that the Bolivian troops were moving more towards the north, I accelerated as much as was humanly possible the preparations for the action of our Second Army Corps, and I caused great impetus to be given to the opening of the road, which previously I had ordered, from Punta Rieles directly to Camacho. Notwithstanding that I had to discard a surprise operation upon the enemy, I continued to believe in the importance of the action of our Second Army Corps.

I had ordered, as previously noted, the opening of a path a little to the west of Cabezón and running northwest in order to join the Lóbrego road and to assure the supply of our Second Army towards Alurralde, anticipating that this unit would occupy Alurralde. But now that a strong force of enemy troops was retreating along the Lóbrego road towards the northwest and that the element of surprise had to be dismissed for the maneuver of our Second Army Corps, on the 10th I ordered the widening of the path which would lead from Camacho to Cururendá. I also directed the opening of another path, which, leaving some point in the region of Siracuas would run in a straight line southwest towards the Pilcomayo River, upon a point equidistant from Villa Montes and Cururendá. But this path was never constructed since it required the employment of equipment which at that time we did not possess and very soon there was no necessity for it because of the swift change in the situation. I had intended to use it for some probable movement against the Bolivian front between Cururendá and Villa Montes.

In the meantime, the retreat of the enemy continued, and on April 11th the liaison of our First Army Corps with the Third Army Corps was established, from Horqueta to Buenos Aires. On the 12th our Third Army Corps occupied Las Conchas. During the following days there were other contacts and new retreats of the enemy in the zone of the Third Army Corps.

On the 16th the enemy broadcast an open communiqué, full of details, concerning a battle in the region of Las Conchas which in fact had never come to pass. This imaginary action was described as extremely sanguinary and, of course, at the end, the Paraguayans were given a resounding spank. On the same day we took prisoner a Bolivian officer who informed us that he had read the above-mentioned communiqué with as much interest and surprise as ourselves, because the battle, to be real, must have taken place in his sector. Naturally we gave the lie to that silly fabrication.

It rained copiously. Our First and Second Army Corps made reconnaissances over great distances with troops on foot towards Picuiba and by the Lóbrego road towards Alurralde. The service rendered by our few planes was very limited since we had not completed as yet the landing fields in Camacho and Cabezón. Nevertheless we badly needed the assistance of the aviators in order to know the routes of the roads which the enemy was constructing in the Alurralde sector with the idea of hampering or altogether impeding our activities in that direction.

On April 21st the Commander of the Second Army Corps reported that in the morning of that day a strong Bolivian patrol had intercepted our path to Cururendá at a place 130 kilometers from Camacho. The enemy continued to retreat in the sector of our Third Army Corps.

Those activities and other facts induced me to make a new journey to the zones covered by our different army corps, and with this object I left Villa Militar on the 23rd. It was uncertain whether the enemy would make a stand in Ballivián, and consequently I deemed it opportune to gather personal impressions in the field of operations. We were aware that the enemy had succeeded in again assembling 33,000 combatants.

I went first to Camacho. I was under the impression that the enemy troops were somewhat scattered. With one detachment he defended Ballivián; he had massed another in the region of Cañada Esperanza-Cañada Strongest-Cañada Oruro, and another in the region of Lafaye-Picuiba-Carandayty. All that must necessarily have some effect upon our plan, which was as follows:

In the north:—

A demonstrative action in the Picuiba region with the object of distracting the attention of the enemy forces in that zone for the longest time possible.

In the south:—

Continue the action upon the positions of Ballivián if the enemy strongly defends that point so as to hold the enemy troops in that region; then apply the principal efforts of our First and Second Army Corps upon the center of the Bolivian disposition in the locality of Cañada Esperanza and head towards either Guachalla or Cururendá in order to surround and destroy the enemy troops of Ballivián. In other words, to destroy successively the different groups into which the enemy army was divided. I acquainted the Commander of the Second Army Corps with the foregoing plan.

On the 24th I went to Cabezón where I also explained to the Commander of the First Army Corps the main features of the plan, and I placed before him concretely the mission of his corps, which would consist in advancing as fast as possible by the Campo Jurado-Cañada Esperanza road to make contact with the principal positions of the enemy and to maneuver by our left in order to draw upon our First Army Corps the enemy detachment in that region, at the same time that our Second Army Corps made its appearance behind the said detachment.

On the 25th I continued my trip to the General Headquarters of the Third Army Corps, then in Puesto Rocha. I explained likewise to the Commander of the corps and the other chiefs the mission assigned to their unit.

On that occasion I fully appreciated the supreme effort that had been made by the Third Army in its long and arduous march by the side of the Pilcomayo River in order to reach the point where it was now situated. It was indeed the most impressive and picturesque caravan. In the transport all available animals had been used—horses, donkeys, dogs, and even goats. That heroic conglomeration came thus on foot from Nanawa, in the midst of fierce combats and exhausting maneuvers and had covered no fewer than 500 kilometers. There was the explanation of the prowess accomplished by our people in the Chaco. Moreover, a number of women had joined the unit, wives, mothers, and daughters of the combatants, and all of them carried something in that amazing pilgrimage on the heels of the enemy.

After a rapid visit to one of the divisions in the line, I made my return by Cabezón, where I explained the situation to the Chief of the First Army Corps and his divisional commanders. I passed then to El Cruce, where I spent the night, and on the following day, the 28th I arrived at Villa Militar. There I found a letter from President Ayala in which he informed me that the resources of the country were exhausted and that he did not feel in good health, a circumstance that might oblige him to take some rest. I was disturbed by both announcements. I had much faith in the success of my plan, but since in my judgment it would require six months to bring it to a head, I was afraid from the information transmitted to me by the President that some serious hitch might be encountered on the way. Accordingly I respectfully requested the Chief Magistrate to come to General Headquarters.

The President arrived on the 30th, as always by air. On the following day we held a conference and I explained to him my plan as described on the previous pages. He adhered to it unreservedly. I wrote in my diary:

> To the explanations which I gave him upon the possible prolongation of the campaign for some months more, saying that the preparatory movements and the development of the plan would entail three months, the President replied with quick understanding that those three months might well be extended to six, which was just the time that I believed necessary to anticipate for the probable duration of the campaign.

Naturally, the term of six months was based upon the assumption that the operations would meet with the expected success, but this was not so, and the war dragged along for another year.

In the later days of April the Third Army Corps, in fulfillment of its mission, took in front of Ballivián successive lines of the enemy defense and obliged him to give way for some kilometers. The preparations of the Second Army Corps continued with all activity. The patrols of this corps had reached Laguna Lafaye.

Two announcements of moment, referring to the enemy, reached General Headquarters about that time—first, the disagreement of President Salamanca with the Command of the Bolivian army; and secondly, the engagement of Chilean officers by Bolivia to serve in the ranks of her army. Of course, we could not know to what the discord between President Salamanca and the military chiefs in the Chaco would lead, but the facts within a few months proved that a reconciliation between them was impossible. As to the conduct of Chile, it produced among us the most painful impression. Paraguay and Chile were united by an old tradition of friendship based upon the virile prestige of both peoples. We were certain that the aid to Bolivia could not be popular in Chile, but that circumstance did not prevent Paraguayan opinion from being profoundly affected. It is hard to discover what national interest could have induced the Chilean Government to countenance the engagement of Chilean officers. It is likely that the Chilean statesmen of that period desired to divert Bolivia's attention towards the southeast in order to lull her aspiration for the recovery of her lost territory on the Pacific. But could they hope that Bolivia would ever vanquish Paraguay? At that stage of the war the failure of Bolivia was at its height. Even granting that Bolivia had been able to crush Paraguay, would our defeat have led her to renounce her maritime dream? By no means. Geography cannot be deceived. Bolivia is tributary to the Pacific and as long as she lives she will cling to her Pacific ambition. This Chilean miscalculation, therefore, contributed nothing toward either the salvation or the distraction of Bolivia, and it served only to prolong the slaughter and to leave in the Paraguayan heart a bitter resentment.

According to our information the enemy army with a force of 40,000 men was distributed at the end of April in three groups as follows: The Third Army Corps covered the region Laguna Lafaye-Picuiba-27 de Noviembre-Carandayty; the Second Army Corps covered the region Cañada Esperanza-Cañada Strongest-Samaihuaté-Cururendá, and the First Army Corps, totally deployed, defended the region Ballivián-Guachalla.

By May 1st with the interception of the path opened by our Second Army Corps towards Cururendá, at Kilometer 130, the enemy presented a line of some kilometers of extension and dug trenches feverishly. One of our regiments made contact with that line.

On May 2nd the enemy aviators bombarded Puerto Guaraní, a tannin factory situated upon the Paraguay River. President Ayala returned to Asunción on that day.

From the 4th our First Army Corps established close contact with the enemy in Cañada Esperanza and obliged their advanced guards to retreat some kilometers. Our Third Army Corps meanwhile, in order to accomplish its mission of holding the enemy, displayed much activity.

On the 8th I had an interview with the Commander of Bahía Negra. I explained to him the general situation and the preparations for the approaching battle and I warned him that the sector in his charge should be defended for no less than two months only with the troops at his disposal before we could detach troops towards the north. This interview took place at Puerto Casado.

I then made another rapid visit of inspection along the front. On the 12th I arrived at Camacho and on the 13th I went to Cabezón. There I noticed that because of the slowness with which the First Army Corps was accomplishing the maneuver in its charge, the enemy might frustrate our intention. It was an insight to me that the execution did not progress in consonance with the necessities of the moment. I entered in my diary:

> The maneuver assigned to the First Army Corps proceeds slowly. The enemy will have time to take his countermeasures. Nevertheless we shall attract a part of the enemy forces especially from the north, a circumstance which will facilitate the destruction of the enemy in Ballivián with the movement of the Second Army Corps by the north of the Bolivian disposition.

On May 14th, our independence day, the President sent to the army in the Chaco the following salute:

> General José Félix Estigarribia,
> Commander in Chief of the Army in the Chaco.
>
> On this day of patriotic jubilation the entire people assembled before the national flag exalt the glories of the gallant defenders of our national sovereignty and reaffirm their unquenchable faith in the definite triumph of our arms. Please transmit to the chiefs, officers, and troops the greetings of the Government of the Republic.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala,
> President of the Republic.

I replied to the President in the following form:

May 15, 1934,
To the President of the Republic, Dr. Eusebio Ayala,
Asunción.

In my own name and in that of the chiefs, officers, and troops of the army under my command I have the honor to thank His Excellency, The President of the Republic, for the greetings which on our independence day we have received from the Supreme National Government; and in reciprocating them I desire to state that the Army in the Chaco, whose victorious banners have revived their old laurels, renew on this solemn occasion their unbreakable determination to conquer or die. With profound respect,

Obediently yours,
Sgd.: General Estigarribia,
Commander in Chief.

We had also a similar interchange of felicitations with the Minister of Defense.

On that day the Bolivian air force bombarded Puerto Mihanovich, Puerto Leda, and Fuerte Olimpo, upon the Paraguay River, without causing much damage.

The same day, the 14th, I arrived at the P.C. of the First Army Corps, situated at 34 kilometers upon the road from Campo Jurado to Cañada Esperanza. In my interview with the Commander of the corps I gave him explanatory directions upon the important mission confided to his unit, which consisted in drawing towards him the enemy troops in his sector, and I authorized him to make some retreat if the circumstances counselled it, in order to facilitate the decisive movement of the Second Army Corps which would fall behind the enemy troops attracted by the First Army Corps. In that respect I was resolved to move back the First Army Corps, and even the Third, in order to induce the attraction of the enemy, a resolution which I maintained for some days, in fact to the end of the month.

The above-noted slowness of the First Army Corps was all the more regrettable because with our energetic action upon Cañada Tarija and the aggressive attitude of our detachments towards Picuiba, which led the enemy to think that our principal action would be prosecuted in that direction, we managed to obtain the sought-for spreading of the Bolivian forces, which I deemed indispensable in order to punish an enemy by that time much superior in number to ourselves. Our army operated with a force of 20,000 men more or less, and that of the enemy, as already stated, was 40,000 strong.

On the 15th I reached Algarrobo, the P.C. of the Third Army Corps, where, in a conference of divisional commanders, I explained and made clear all the points of the mission that was necessary from that unit, which would be a movement with two divisions towards the right wing (north) with the object of isolating, if possible, the defenders of Ballivián.

After the middle of the day I returned to El Cruce, where I installed my post of combat. The enemy aviators had bombarded Bahía Negra and Curupatyty, the latter a post of vigilance situated 12 or 15 kilometers from Bahía Negra. On the 15th our troops occupied Laguna Lafaye, abandoned by the enemy.

The Bolivians displayed an unusual activity, and that led me to presume that in some form they would forestall us. Every day they bombarded the ports on the Paraguay River, from Bahía Negra down; they made important concentrations in Castrillo, to the northwest of our Fortín Galpón; they retired from the region of Laguna Lafaye, and instituted actions somewhat energetic in front of Ballivián against our Third Army Corps. My fear that they might gain time was based on the fact that because of difficulties of every kind the action of our Second Army Corps could not be launched until after the 20th.

On the 16th, 17th, and 18th a maneuver of our First Army Corps taken by the left continued its development normally. With that movement we had gone beyond the corresponding wing of the enemy. From the early morning on the 19th the enemy in Ballivián pressed heavily along all the front of our Third Army, but was checked on all sides with considerable losses. On the same day, the 19th, the Commander of our First Army Corps reported that some enemy patrols had appeared behind his first lines on the Lóbrego road, between Kilometers 50 and 60 from Campo Jurado. They were repulsed, but at the fall of night on the same day another Bolivian force appeared upon the same road in the locality of Kilometer 60.

On the following day an important enemy troop emerged upon it in the neighborhood of Kilometer 57, and the previous detachment on Kilometer 60 had not yet been repulsed. The enemy troop on Kilometer 57 cut the road between our troops deployed in the first line and our reserve. Further, between those enemy troops on Kilometers 57 and 60, respectively, the Paraguayan battalion Pitiantuta—whose mission was nevertheless that of observation—found itself cut off. Happily a road parallel to that intercepted by the enemy, which ran more to the east from the point occupied by our troops of the first line to our reserve (Eighth Division) was still open, and orders were issued to the effect that the troops of the first line (Divisions Seventh and Second, with the artillery) should retreat, protected by the Eighth Division which would make immediate contact with the enemy troops of incursion; all that in conformity with the intention of retaining upon our First Army Corps those enemy forces, while the Second Army Corps could accomplish its projected movement, which, according to a communication of its Commander, could not be undertaken until after the 21st.

On the 21st the Commander of the First Army Corps ordered that, the same night, our first line divisions which were cut off should detach themselves from the enemy. But the Commander of the Second Division, which was deployed on the right of our disposition, advised that he had defeated the Bolivian troops to the north, to the northeast and to the east, and he announced that he would remain in his position. In doing so he would lose the necessary time for the preparation of his retreat. On the 22nd, in fulfillment of the aforementioned order, the artillery and the Seventh Division accomplished their retreat in order, having detached themselves from the enemy during the night, as prescribed, with all their equipment. But the Second Division, delayed by the previously noted decision of its Commander, was cut from its road of retreat by enemy contingents coming precisely from the east, the direction that the said Commander had believed cleared on the previous day.

With regard to the Pitiantuta battalion, shut off by the enemy troops on the road to the west, it saw no chance for retreat. It numbered about 100 men and it was surrounded by approximately 3,000 Bolivians.

All that day the radio of the Second Division was silent and we received no information from it or from the Pitiantuta battalion. Meanwhile our Third Army Corps shifted the center of gravity towards the north wing, seeking contact with the First Army Corps; and the Second Army Corps continued its assembly with all rapidity in order to initiate the action under its charge.

The Commander of our First Army Corps proposed to me that his unit should retire still more, but I did not consider that move advisable unless the enemy returned to make contact with our first line, particularly since we had no information from the Second Division. On the other hand the mission of the First Army Corps to draw the enemy forces of its sector was to be maintained.

The entire morning of the 23rd passed without any intimation from the Second Division until in the early hours of the afternoon the Commander thereof appeared upon our new line. Shortly afterwards one of the regiments of the same unit arrived.

Some unsuccessful assaults of the enemy upon our positions in front of Ballivián endeavored to attract our attention to that side.

But on the night of the 23rd our Second Army Corps was totally assembled at the extremity of the *picada* towards Cururendá at a place near Kilometer 130 starting from Camacho, ready to accomplish its mission. On the same day I had ordered that the First Division of infantry of the Third Army Corps should also be assembled for transportation in trucks to the theater of operations of the Second Army Corps, with the intention of imparting the greatest possible momentum to the action of that unit.

On the 24th the connection of our First and Third Army Corps was established with the result that the Paraguayan troops presented by that time a front more or less continuous with the two corps in order to respond to the initiative of the enemy. There was no movement possible for the enemy but by the north wing, and if he attempted that he was lost because our Second Army Corps would fall upon him. On the same day the regiment Dos de Mayo joined the Second Division in our line with two of its battalions, and that regiment announced the coming of another battalion which never arrived. These two battalions came without any opposition from the enemy and with all their equipment.

Unfortunately, on that date the other detachments of our Second Division surrendered to the enemy. They consisted of a regiment and a battalion. But the hundred men of the Pitiantuta battalion under the command of Capt. Joel Estigarribia[47] continued to defend themselves bravely on the western side.

On the 25th the enemy tied up by our surrounded troops established contact with the new line held by the First Army Corps. But because of divers difficulties our Second Army Corps could not commence its movement until the 27th, and the enemy, who had employed all his troops against our First Army Corps, with the surrender of our detachments on the 24th found a good part of its units free to move in order to evade the action of our Second Army Corps.

The movement of our troops of the Second Army Corps continued through the 28th, and the following day that corps intercepted some roads in the rear of the enemy troops at its front, one division strong, and at the same time its north wing marched without difficulty, that is, without any presence of the enemy. On the same day we reinforced the Second Army Corps with the entire First Division of infantry. But already by the afternoon of the 29th the enemy troops fronting our First Army had commenced their retreat, and on the 30th the enemy facing our Second Army Corps was defeated in bad condition and fled from our pursuit by paths opened in the wood. On the two fronts the enemy left in our possession prisoners and a great quantity of elements of all kinds. In the First Army Corps sector we gathered mortars and the equipment belonging to the captured Paraguayan troops, which the Bolivians, in the hurry of their retirement, had not been able to transport—a fact which shows that they had retreated with utmost rapidity in order to escape the stroke prepared by our Second Army Corps.

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[47] No relative of Marshal Estigarribia.

A slow advance of our troops of the First and Second Army Corps followed, under the hard conditions that the terrain of that region imposed, and that gave time for the enemy to prepare new points of resistance which, little by little, were converted into a continuous line from a point north of Cañada Esperanza to Ballivián.[48]

Thus it was that the failure of a divisional Commander of our First Army Corps prevented the realization of the maneuver of our Second Army Corps in time, which precipitated the collapse of all the plan. The enemy magnified very much the capture of our surrounded detachments. He said in his communiqués that thousands of Paraguayan prisoners were taken and that thousands of our soldiers were lost in the woods. Yet in the actions of Cañada Esperanza we lost no more than 600 prisoners. Nevertheless, it was understandable that, for reasons of propaganda, the Bolivians should publicize rather ostentatiously their unusual success.

That was all that occurred in Cañada Esperanza. As might have been expected, public opinion in Paraguay was greatly disturbed; and there were people who readily threw upon my shoulders all the blame for the mishap. According to them, Cañada Esperanza, the ugly child of disaster, ought to recognize no other father than myself. When I heard of this single fatherhood I could not help contrasting it with the abundant crop of paternal pretenders which the victory of Campo Vía had produced the previous year—on which occasion the doom of the two Bolivian divisions had no sooner become known, when at least four self-confessed strategists, hitherto unannounced, claimed all the credit, each one exclusively for himself.[49]

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[48] The actions just described are known as a whole by the name of *Battle of Strongest*, an incorrect denomination. The theater in which these actions took place was *Cañada Esperanza*. *Cañada Strongest*, also known as *Cañada Oruro*, was more to the north.—J.F.E.

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[49] When the surrender of the Bolivian army in Campo Vía (*supra*, Chapter IX) resulted in a neat victory for the Paraguayan army, professional rivalries were aroused in Paraguay, and more than one military chief who was not on good terms with Marshal Estigarribia insinuated that the latter had relied for that accomplishment on the inspiration of others, the implication being, of course, that the merits were not really his. On the other hand, the setback of Cañada Esperanza was unreservedly attributed to the faulty leadership of Estigarribia by the same complainers. The Marshal used to remember in that connection a remark allegedly made by Marshal Joffre after the victory of the French army over the German in the Marne, September, 1914: "I don't know to whose merits was the victory of the Marne, but I am sure that if we had lost the battle, I would have been the only culprit to blame."

CHAPTER XIII

Our Failure of July, 1934

On May 30th I received from the Ministry of Defense the first announcement of the possibility that the League of Nations would declare an embargo on the sale of arms, a move which we had to anticipate by the careful allotment of our equipment of war.

On June 2nd I noted in my diary: "I believe that the enemy will abandon Ballivián in consequence of our pressure upon the north wing of his general disposition in the zone of the [Paraguayan] Second Army Corps."[50] The reasons counselling that abandonment were so obvious that I had no doubt by then of its speedy adoption by the enemy. But by the end of the same month of June I realized that I had fallen into an error. The Bolivians would not abandon Ballivián with our pressure upon their north wing and thus leave open to our initiative the possibility of destroying all their army along the Pilcomayo River.

On June 12th I authorized the Commander of our Second Army Corps to inaugurate on the following day, the 13th, an action upon the said enemy wing. Our First Division of infantry was charged with the execution of the envolvement whilst the other Army Corps held the enemy on their respective fronts. But the accomplishment of the maneuver encountered many snags because of the multiplicity of roads which previously had to be reconnoitered in order to guard against possible actions of the enemy from the north side, that is, from the side of Cañada El Carmen, and by other difficulties arising out of the terrain.

On the 14th the enemy fronting our Division of General Reserve (Second Army Corps), which operated towards the southern wing, retreated, being pursued. On the 15th contact was reestablished four kilometers from the starting point. With the object of curbing the advance of our First Division the enemy in Cañada El Carmen, whose presence in that region had been made known by our aviators some days before, attacked strongly our extreme right wing with a contingent of some 3,000 men. Evidently the Bolivians harbored the hope of envolving that wing. Then a sanguinary struggle ensued, which at times was hand to hand, but the enemy effort was frustrated. We caused havoc in the Bolivian ranks. The dead were no fewer than 400. We verified that the enemy soldiers were inebriated, and that accounted for the horrible carnage. In that action the Chilean officers recently incorporated in the enemy army received their baptism of fire, and some of them, according to the declaration of prisoners, figured among the dead.

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[50] The following year, in one of my interviews with General Peñaranda, I asked him why the Bolivian army had persisted in Ballivián in a situation so dangerous since they were under the threat of being surrounded. General Peñaranda explained that this obstinacy was due to President Salamanca, who made the question of preserving Ballivián one of national *amour propre*, and that this was one of the causes of his disagreement with the army which eventually led to his overthrow.—J.F.E.

On the 16th the enemy undertook two more assaults but were again repulsed with heavy losses. By that time the number of Bolivian dead on that front amounted to 600. The result of all that was an enemy retreat which, on the 17th, had spread itself into the region of our First Army Corps along an extension of 40 kilometers.

That retreat was followed by others. On the 18th our Third Army Corps broke the enemy line along a front of one kilometer and immediately received furious counterattacks but did not abandon the conquered positions.

The same day, the 18th, I wrote a letter to the President in reply to one of his of the 14th. I suggested an interview since I had noticed, according to my diary, that "he [the President] was disturbed by political self-seekers, civil and military, who, in these days, are displaying much activity on account of the reverse suffered recently by our First Army Corps (Second Division)."

By that time I received the first intimations concerning the activities of the enemy from the region of Ingavi to the southeast, which, to be confirmed, would require preferential attention on the part of my Command. An operation of the enemy by the side of Ingavi might aim at Pitiantuta or at the Paraguay River, and that obliged me to initiate active explorations from Bahía Negra towards Vitriones, from Coronel Bogado towards Florida, and from Pitiantuta towards the north, in which direction we already had encountered enemy patrols at some 15 kilometers from our *fortín* and verified the existence of roads. Precautions had also to be taken towards Picuiba, since, in that region, the enemy had Garrapatal as his objective. And finally other data had informed us that the enemy was preparing some attack on Las Conchas, in the Ballivián sector.

Meanwhile there arrived in Bolivia new contingents of Chilean officers who, with those already engaged, increased their number in the Bolivian army to 300. Further, Bolivian agents made contracts with Chilean "workers" *(obreros)*, a trick intended to provide Bolivia not only with officers but with soldiers, since the workers would proceed to the mines to replace the native miners who would be called to the army.

On the 19th the Bolivian troops attacking our extreme right commenced to retreat. Our First Army Corps continued its search for the new enemy position.

On the 21st other attempts of the enemy, proceeding from Cañada El Carmen upon our extreme right, were hindered. In those actions we captured a number of rifles, machine guns, and other equipment. The enemy abandoned 70 dead bodies belonging to the Castrillo regiment.

A certain activity of the enemy was observed in the Picuiba sector.

On that day the Minister of Defense, Dr. Víctor Rojas, arrived at my P.C. in El Cruce. We conferred upon the international situation. Dr. Rojas told me on behalf of the President that Argentina was bringing pressure to bear upon Paraguay to make peace. He informed me also that the financial situation was very bad.

Because of the actions of the 21st the Bolivians again commenced to diffuse false information regarding imaginary Paraguayan defeats, and they said that our troops were in grave danger. My Command refuted those reports with the following open pronouncement:

June 25, 1934,
Ministry of Defense,
Asunción.

The enemy command again invent a battle and attribute to themselves a victory which does not exist. After the defeat suffered by the Bolivian Second Army Corps in the sector of Cañada El Carmen, a corps originally formed by Divisions Third and Eighth under the command of Col. Bernardino Bilbao Rioja and afterwards reinforced by the regiments Sucre and Pérez belonging to the Fourth Division brought from the Ballivián sector; with the regiments Chuquisaca, Montes, Cochabamba, and Castrillo of the Ninth Division brought from the Picuiba sector, and the regiments Asurduy, Coro-Coro and Lanza from the General Reserve of the army, the enemy continues up to today his retreat in various sectors, leaving in the hands of our troops successively three formidable positions. An attempt of local reaction by the enemy has been punished with the destruction of the Castrillo regiment 6 of cavalry commanded by Lt. Col. Walter Méndez brought hurriedly from the Picuiba sector. It is entirely false that any movement of the Bolivian army has, at any moment, placed in danger the Paraguayan troops, who have continued their advance victoriously.

As may be observed, we were very well informed regarding the situation of the enemy, and under such circumstances it was very hard to deceive us. On the same day, in our daily report, we announced that the enemy had just retreated a total of 5 kilometers towards Cañada El Carmen.

Although because of the extreme scarcity of machines our aviators could not take any outstanding part, nevertheless they displayed veritable prowess and rendered valuable service. Thus, on the 26th, our aviators defeated an enemy squadron of four airplanes in a combat which lasted fifteen minutes. The difference between our planes and those of the Bolivians—which was practically the same in all the equipments of war—was considerable. The Bolivians employed fast pursuit Curtis planes while our aviators had only very slow French bombers. A Bolivian prisoner informed us that as a result of that combat on the 26th an enemy plane crashed near our positions but in the enemy camp.

In view of the persistent difficulty of sending livestock on foot to the army, it was decided to manufacture canned beef stew, which was supplied to the troops with very good results.

The anxiety arising from the paucity of means of transport was always acute. At that time all our Third Army Corps had no more than 20 trucks. I find in my diary a notation to the effect that I was compelled to postpone our operations owing to the shortage of means of mobility. We could not even supply our troops in movement. Accordingly I decided to request Asunción to send to us the trucks ordinarily utilized for public service.

On the 27th I undertook with the Minister of Defense a journey along the front. Since the operations were paralyzed by lack of transport, I decided during that tour to inform myself in detail concerning the situation and to order the necessary preparations for our new offensive actions which would be undertaken as soon as our means of mobility permitted. We arrived at the General Headquarters of the Second Army Corps. On that day a new retreat of the enemy had been inaugurated on our right wing. The condition of the roads was dreadful. I explained to the Commander of the Second Army Corps that I maintained integrally the operational intention of my plan, which consisted in acting upon the north wing of the enemy's forces with the object of seeking a decisive battle, but that, obliged for the moment to suspend the continuation of the operations in view of the rapid retreat and the temporary failure of means of transport, the Second Army Corps must make new contact and, after so doing, study minutely either an outflanking action or a rupture of the enemy front in its zone of operations.

On the 28th we left for the P.C. of the First Army Corps which was situated upon the Lóbrego road. I confirmed to the Commander of the corps the mission of co-operation which he must undertake with the Second Army Corps, and I explained to him further that he must prepare one of his divisions to reinforce the action of the Second Army Corps.

On the 29th we passed to the P.C. of the Third Army Corps, to whose Commander I also expressed my intentions and prescribed to him the conduct that his unit must observe in the following hypotheses: (1) that the enemy should attack with such force that it would be impossible to withstand him; (2) that the enemy should retreat from Ballivián. Up to that time I could not dispel my amazement at the obstinacy of the enemy in Ballivián.

On the same day we returned to my P.C. in El Cruce. On the 30th I wrote in my diary:

> At 7:30 A.M. the Minister of Defense departs on his return to the Capital. I repeat to him that the operations are suspended until we can count upon means of transport and that this circumstance is not without its dangers as it may permit the enemy to recover the initiative in the operations.

I then decided upon another journey along the front. I noticed certain slackening in the enthusiasm of some chiefs of our great units, a fact which I ascribed to the prolongation of the campaign and to the setback of the month of May. Some chiefs had no longer the optimistic sprightliness of former times, and it appeared that it was my duty to instill some reaction among them.

The relative calm continued. On July 3rd I proceeded to the General Headquarters of the Third Army Corps. In company with its Commander I visited the lines, "in order to begin," I noted in my diary, "the moral preparation for the approaching battle with my exhortations to all the commanders, from the regiments upwards." In the P.C. of the Fourth Division I spoke with the Commander thereof and the commanders of regiments, and I infused all possible fire into my words. I did the same in Las Conchas with the chiefs of the Fifth Division.

On the following day I visited the P.C. of the Second Division of cavalry, of the Eighth Division, belonging to the First Army Corps, and of the Seventh Division. In all places I spoke with fervor about the approaching battle and gave the appropriate directions.

On the 5th I left for the Second Army Corps. In passing I visited the Second Division and the P.C. of the General Reserve. I arrived at the General Headquarters of the Second Army Corps a little after noon, and later I passed to the P.C. of the First and Sixth Divisions. At night I returned to the General Headquarters of the Second Army Corps where I remained for the night.

I was busy all the morning on the 6th with preparations for the action of the Second Army Corps. I fixed the dates for the development of operations in the following manner: On July 8th the Third Army Corps should attack in the Ballivián sector, on the 9th the First Army Corps, in the direction of Guachalla, and the

Second Army Corps should attack on the 10th. Thus I thought to attract the attention of the enemy toward the extreme south of the line; then, with the First Army Corps, threaten him in the direction to Guachalla with the same object, attracting thereto the enemy reserves; and finally deliver the principal stroke with the Second Army Corps. (See Map No. 5.)

In the afternoon I returned to the General Headquarters of the First Army Corps, where I fixed my P.C. of combat. Along all the fronts I encountered a very good disposition on the part of all officers and this reassured me.

On the 7th I dictated the general orders of operations for the battle. The final arrangements were made with feverish activity. On the 8th our Third Army Corps, after brilliant assaults, broke the enemy front of Ballivián, taking three successive positions and advancing to a depth of six kilometers. We captured 100 prisoners. The enemy dead amounted to more than 200. In his flight the enemy left behind numerous elements—automatic arms, munition stations, tents, supply stations, hundreds of thousands of projectiles. But we could not exploit that success on account of its magnitude. We had determined only to divert the attention of the enemy, and we had not, at the moment, sufficient effectives to go ahead with such a deep penetration. Our planes, which had in their charge the bombardment of Ballivián, engaged on the same day in a combat with the enemy planes over Ballivián. Our pilots shot down one of the enemy planes which fell within its own lines and they returned afterwards to their bases in perfect condition. Among the corpses of 15 enemy officers killed in this section were identified the first dead Chilean officers.

On the 9th our First Army Corps, in fulfillment of its mission, also assaulted and tore a gap in the enemy front in the direction of Guachalla but without advancing much because of the difficulties of the terrain which was covered with entangling woods. Further, we pushed back the enemy line upon the Lóbrego road beyond his fortified positions.

But the Second Army could not accomplish its mission in the desired form. On the 10th, at 6:20 A.M., it initiated its action with an intense bombardment of artillery and mortars. It also broke the enemy line, but after a short advance the ranks were disorganized by the loss of their officers and the confusion created among them by the maze of new roads behind the conquered positions. In addition, our troops were thrown into the battle in very narrow spaces, and there came about a mingling among themselves which very soon rendered any co-ordinated action impossible. Our initial momentum once spent, and while we were trying to reorganize our units, the enemy had time to bring up reinforcements and to check definitely our advance.

On the same day of the 10th from 9 A.M. the enemy counterattacked in Ballivián with fresh troops seeking to reoccupy the positions lost on the 8th. There followed a bloody struggle, but by 2 P.M. the counterattack was utterly paralyzed. Our troops returned to the attack and destroyed a battalion of the enemy Florida regiment and a squadron of the Avaroa.

But there was balked one more effort which aimed at the destruction of the enemy army deployed along the Pilcomayo River. Despite that fact I was not convinced that the premises of my conception for the accomplishment of that design were ill-founded. On the contrary, I was quite determined once more to seek the same end because the enemy always exposed himself by remaining in a position so dangerous to him.

CHAPTER XIV

The Paraguayan Army Strategically Surrounded—Picuiba: The March to Carandayty

With our failure of July 10th a new problem arose to occupy the first place. From the month of May it was observed that the enemy displayed much activity in the region southeast of Ingavi. Our aviators noticed that in Fortín Florida the Bolivians built great sheds and prepared landing fields and at the same time opened new roads. Our patrols in Pitiantuta discovered the existence of *picadas* recently cleared through which the enemy made reconnaissances. Those facts corroborated other information according to which the enemy would attempt some action in that area with the view either of reaching the Paraguay River or proceeding to Pitiantuta and to Punta Rieles, the terminal of the Puerto Casado railroad.

We were therefore confronted by a danger which demanded the adoption of rapid measures. Further, the Bolivian army, much more numerous than ours, counting some 50,000 combatants against 20,000 Paraguayans, had had time to accumulate sufficient forces to neutralize the action of our Second Army Corps, a circumstance which compelled us for the time being to desist from the action charged to that unit. Finally, an examination of the map showed that the Paraguayan army was situated within a great arc that the enemy deployment embraced. In other words, our army was strategically half surrounded.

On July 11th our three Army Corps undertook some local actions in order to consolidate the positions gained, and on the 12th I ordered the temporary suspension of operations with the purpose of proceeding to a general reorganization of the units and to give the troops some rest.

On the 13th some local counterattacks by the enemy in Ballivián and upon the Lóbrego road were easily repulsed. After taking certain measures relative to the momentary suspension of operations, I returned on the 14th to my P.C. of El Cruce in order to await the President—who had arrived that afternoon at Villa Militar. On the 15th he came to El Cruce.

The President reported that the Argentine Government shortly would present a proposition to the belligerents. I described to him the last actions and I depicted the general situation in somber colors. "Our situation," I told him, "is really grave because of the danger to which we are exposed." "Consequently," I added, "we have to act in the direction of Picuiba in order to upset, through a blow in that zone, any intention the enemy may harbor in the region to the southeast of Ingavi of heading to the Paraguay River or of falling upon Pitiantuta." I expressed to him then that we were in no condition to check directly this action of the enemy. In Bahía Negra, I pointed out, we did not have sufficient troops for stopping a movement of enemy forces from Puerto Suárez, who possibly might co-operate with the troops in the Ingavi region, commanded by General Lanza. Therefore we had to resort to an indirect method, which had to be adopted without delay because the Bolivian patrols were already within ten kilometers of Pitiantuta. I summarized my operational idea in the following manner:

Strike swiftly Picuiba with the object of intercepting at 27 de Noviembre the principal and shortest road of supply of the Bolivian troops under General Lanza, by which action we should also menace the regions of the Parapití River and Carandayty. Forthwith, if circumstances permitted, launch ourselves upon Carandayty and the Parapití River in order to threaten Charagua, Boyuibé, and Camiri, and oblige the enemy to reduce the mass of his troops on the Pilcomayo front so that we could again act in that zone. But in the initial moment, because of our possibilities, we should confine the first push of our troops to Fortín Algodonal, in the direction of Carandayty, and 27 de Noviembre, by the north.

The President, with his characteristic quick-mindedness, instantly grasped the reality of the situation, and at once gave his approval to the plan. He stated also that the taking of Picuiba by our troops would contribute materially to the success of the diplomatic negotiations to which he had referred.

On the 16th the President received the following telegram from the Minister of Foreign Relations, Dr. Benítez:

> I received telegram from Rivarola. Ambassador Espil finds favorable atmosphere in Department of State, but Hull insists upon inclusion of Brazil among the mediators in order to secure Bolivian acceptance. According to Espil's telegram United States requires conformity of Paraguay to the formula in order to make it official and to prevent new failures by possible refusal. The formula has been delivered by Saavedra Lamas to Casto Rojas and the Brazilian Ambassador. Rivarola awaits urgent instructions. Sincerely,
>
> Sgd.: Benítez,
> Minister of Foreign Relations and Worship.[51]

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[51] When the failure of the League of Nations to bring about peace between Bolivia and Paraguay became clear, new efforts were made by the American nations to find a solution for the long-drawn-out conflict by themselves. Conversations to that end commenced at the initiative, especially, of Argentina.

The President replied to the Minister of Foreign Relations on the same day:

> You may answer that we should view with satisfaction the inclusion of Brazil and, if desired, of Uruguay also. We understand it is not advisable to give our consent before the official presentation of the formula to both countries. It would be preferable to await Bolivian action because we have experience that our acceptance is likely to arouse suspicions. Our official acceptance cannot be given before certain consultations, but the mediators can count upon our good will. Sincerely,
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

The President returned to Asunción on the 18th. On the same day I arranged a rendezvous in Camacho with the Commander of the Second Army Corps, my Chief of General Staff, who was in Villa Militar, and the Commander of the troops detached towards Picuiba in order to communicate to them my new resolutions. I left for Camacho on the 19th. After explaining to the above-mentioned chiefs my purpose of action upon Picuiba, I directed the preparatory works, which consisted in the search for water—which was fundamental—by digging wells, previous patrolling, the accumulation of means of transport, and so on. I designated a division of our Second Army Corps to take charge of these operations.

I then made a journey to the General Headquarters of the First Army Corps, by the Florida road, which runs from Camacho to Cañada Esperanza. On our way we were overtaken by the night and we had to sleep in the open air in the midst of intense cold. The following day we arrived at the General Headquarters of the First Army Corps, to whose Commander I explained the project upon Picuiba and gave him the appropriate instructions upon the mission which would concern his unit. While I was there, the following message from the President was retransmitted to me by telephone from Villa Militar:

> President Salamanca stated to the Argentine Minister that he does not accept the proposed solution and that he insists upon concession of outlet on Paraguay River as a condition for the cessation of the war. Minister adds that Salamanca has entire certainty in approaching triumph of Bolivian arms.

The telegram quoted above is concerning an exchange of ideas between Dr. Felipe Espil, Argentine ambassador in Washington, D.C., and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. The purpose was to pull some countries together, particularly those bordering the warring nations, in an endeavor to renew a concerted diplomatic action.

Dr. Justo Pastor Benítez, who signed the telegram, was the minister of foreign affairs of Paraguay; Dr. Carlos Saavedra Lamas was the minister of foreign affairs of Argentina; Dr. Casto Rojas was the Bolivian minister in Buenos Aires; and Dr. Vicente Rivarola was the Paraguayan minister in the same city.

I thought that the refusal of President Salamanca might be regarded as a slight to Argentina rather than a lack of desire to terminate the war.

In the first fortnight of July the Bolivian Government announced to its army in the Chaco the arrival of a Czechoslovakian military mission and requested the opinion of the commanders thereon. This announcement produced a very bad impression among the commanders. President Salamanca always harbored serious misgivings about the ability of the native officers, and the failure of General Kundt had not convinced him of the danger of entrusting the fate of the army to foreign leaders. The Czechoslovakian military mission had no active intervention in the direction of operations. It was limited to a visit to the Chaco and the formulation of some suggestions.

On the 21st I had an interview with the Commander of the Third Army Corps at the place where the Lóbrego road crosses that from Cabezón to Las Conchas. I pointed out to him the mission of his corps in the course of the projected operations. He should consolidate his positions and at most undertake only local actions in order to better his situation. I then returned to my P.C. of combat at El Cruce.

Accordingly I had completed my third journey along the front since the latter days of June. Each one of those trips covered no fewer than 500 kilometers over frightful roads full of mud or dust, over which the vehicles bumped and jostled against the unremoved stumps of trees felled to clear the *picada,* and in the rain and cold. In that month I was particularly concerned with the declining alacrity of our officers, and I spared no effort to revive in them the ardor of the first months of the war. For two long years they had battled, marched and countermarched, almost without relief. In reality no one could afford any rest, and it was perfectly natural that that tension should lead to exhaustion. On the other hand, we fought against a very resilient enemy who, after seemingly irretrievable calamities, would regain his strength and start all over again with exasperating tenacity. To all of which must be added the clear realization that our army did not occupy a reassuring strategic situation. It was essential, however, that that slackening should not display itself in our push against the enemy, and consequently I did not cease for a single day to inspire a spirit of optimism for the stimulation of all. I must confess that I was startled at the result of my efforts. No sooner did I communicate a new conception than those weary men recovered as if by magic and responded unreservedly to the call. In that manner, after having shattered one powerful enemy army, they were about to destroy another more powerful still.

About that time there was an interchange of opinions among the Ministry of Defense, the Commander in the Chaco and the newspapers of Asunción upon the best method of organizing the flow of news in order not only to inform correctly and encourage public opinion, but also to avoid unintentional indiscretions which might prejudice the progress of operations. As a result of those discussions Radio-Prensa was set up as a propaganda agency in the Command in the Chaco from where daily information and comments were broadcast concerning the course of the campaign. In a very short time Radio-Prensa turned out to be an efficient cog of our propaganda machinery and rendered invaluable service. The commentaries of Radio-Prensa will always be a highly important source for future historians of the war.

The Pilcomayo line entered upon a period of relative calm. Along it there occurred only local actions, except upon our extreme right wing, where, as I have said, the enemy had started his activities from the middle of May, with the object of forestalling our outflanking movement in that region and afterwards for the purpose of intercepting our road towards Cururendá behind our Second Army Corps, and further eventually to take Garrapatal. Then commenced a strenuous struggle, in those spiny woods which provided opportunity for every kind of surprise and ambush. The enemy would open a road that our troops would intercept in little time but only to find themselves cut off, and that continued indefinitely. It was a game of hide and seek with death.

As the month of July wore on the information that the enemy was preparing some important general action took a definite shape. He developed much activity from Fortín Galpón, in the far north, as far south as Cañada Strongest and El Carmen. Rapidity of action on our part was therefore fundamental since, in order to dispel the crisis, we must get ahead of the enemy in time.

A little after the end of the month I made a journey to Puerto Casado in order to take certain measures and to assure better efficiency in our line of supply from the river front. On July 28th I received in Puerto Casado the good tidings that our diggers of wells had found potable water in the Laguna Lafaye region. I wrote in my diary:

> This makes possible our projected action upon Picuiba. I speed up as much as possible the preparations for this action with the intention of accomplishing it before the enemy has time to act upon Pitiantuta and towards the Paraguay River, from Florida.

On the 30th I returned to my P.C. in El Cruce. There I found my good friend, Dr. Manuel María Oliver, correspondent of *La Razón* of Buenos Aires. He informed me upon the sympathetic opinion prevailing for our cause in countries beyond our frontiers. Dr. Oliver then interviewed me.

On the same day an action of patrols around our post of Yapeyú, in the Bahía Negra area, confirmed the activities and preparations of the enemy in that locality.

On the 31st I resolved to transfer my General Headquarters to Camacho in order to hasten the operation upon Picuiba and to take better care of the defense of Pitiantuta, to where I sent more troops. For the operation upon Picuiba we organized squads of well diggers who regularly followed our army and dug wells as we advanced.

Meanwhile the scurvy played havoc in our ranks.

On August 2nd I established myself permanently in Camacho. After eight months of laborious work the direct road from Punta Rieles (the Puerto Casado railroad terminal) to Camacho was completed.

The commanders of all the Army Corps were summoned to a conference on the 5th in my new Headquarters at Camacho, where I intended to explain better my intentions concerning the approaching operations. I ordered that the First Army Corps extend itself towards the north so as to embrace the front held by the Second Army Corps and in order to permit the latter to move and act more freely. I had resolved that during the following week we should undertake the operation upon Picuiba, which I considered in the light of the following hypotheses, according to my diary:

> (1) The enemy remains in his present positions; (2) The enemy establishes a new line after retreating upon Guachalla and extends his wings towards the north; (3) The enemy retreats successively as far back as the general line Cururendá-Capiírendá-Carandayty-Boyuibé.

In the first days of August the enemy aviators endeavored to distract our attention towards the north by systematically bombarding Bahía Negra, Puerto Guaraní, Fuerte Olimpo, and other points. That useless employment of the enemy air force can be explained only by his intention to draw our attention to the north.

On the 5th the announced meeting of the commanders of the Army Corps took place in my Headquarters. All of them came by plane. I informed them of the general situation, and I explained my plan elaborately and indicated to them the methods for the execution of the respective missions which I had assigned to each Army

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Marshal Estigarribia in his newly-established General Headquarters at Camacho.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

The Pilcomayo River. The opposite bank is Argentine territory.

Corps. I ordered that the Commander of the First Army Corps should supervise the actions in charge of the detachment belonging to the Second Army Corps which was in Cañada El Carmen. The Commander of the Second Army Corps left the conference and proceeded directly to Siracuas in order to conduct personally the execution of operations.

On the 6th I ordered the garrison of Pitiantuta to make a reconnaissance in force towards the north, and to occupy, if possible, the first enemy *fortín* in its way, which would be either Madrejoncito or Lagunillas, and to that end it had to effect a junction of its road with that of the enemy which by then was approaching to within a few kilometers of Pitiantuta.

My intention was to co-ordinate that action with that of greater scope which we were preparing upon Picuiba; to occupy Madrejón, where the road which our detachment must follow crosses that coming from Bahía Negra by Fortín Coronel Bogado and Florida, and assemble in Madrejón all the Paraguayan detachments in that region in order to proceed afterwards to Ingavi. By that movement Bahía Negra and the littoral of the Paraguay River would be entirely protected on that side, and, at the same time, Bahía Negra would be connected with Pitiantuta.

On August 6th our aviators observed that the enemy road from Cañada Strongest had been extended 10 kilometers and was directed towards the rear of the zone of our Second Army Corps southeastwards in order to reach the road from Camacho to Alurralde at a distance of 111 kilometers from Camacho. With that information I comprehended that the enemy had not realized up to then our preparations for action upon Picuiba, towards which region we transported more and more troops of our Second Army Corps (Sixth Division). The enemy intended to cut off those troops by the road he had extended, not knowing that they were being moved in another direction.

On the 7th our aviators bombarded that extension and dispersed the Bolivian workers. Because of the bombardment the enemy aviators carefully watched Quince de Abril all the day of the 8th while our troops in that sector sought to intercept the enemy road.

On the 9th I summoned the Chief of the General Staff of Bahía Negra to Puerto Casado in order to give him some clear instructions with regard to the mission of his troops in that area in coordination with those of Pitiantuta. On the same day the Commander of the Second Army Corps reported to me that his troops would be ready to operate against Picuiba on the 12th.

The movement was initiated on the 13th at 4 A.M. That day our troops marched over one-half of their itinerary. I advised the commanders of the First and Third Army Corps that on the 16th they must inaugurate their action of co-operation.

On the 14th at 8 P.M. I received the information that our troops had taken an enemy redoubt in the Picuiba sector and had captured 200 prisoners.

On the 15th, on the occasion of the second anniversary of President Ayala's term, I sent to him the following message:

> The Paraguayan people in arms under my Command in the Chaco send through me to Your Excellency, on the occasion of your anniversary of today, their most respectful salutations, and they reaffirm their unbreakable faith in the fruitful action of your enlightened statesmanship and in the great Government over which you preside.
>
> Sgd.: General Estigarribia,
> Commander in Chief of the Army in the Chaco.

The President acknowledged that salutation with the following message:

> I have received the message of your Command with deep emotion. The close union among our citizens permits the country to confront successfully the treacherous assault of Bolivia. The Government and the nation take great pride in supporting the glorious army of the Chaco.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala,
> President of the Republic.

On the 15th one of our detachments intercepted at 7:30 A.M., in the rear of Picuiba, the only road of retirement of the enemy, at a distance of 6 or 7 kilometers from that place, towards the north. That act precipitated the dispersal of the defenders of the enemy position, but almost all of them, numbering about one thousand, fell into our power. Only a few managed to escape. We gathered considerable booty, consisting of trucks, heavy and light machine guns, mortars, munitions. Since some of the Bolivian fugitives sought shelter in the woods, where they were exposed to death by hunger or thirst, we forthwith organized patrols of succor.

Our troops continued throughout the same day towards their other immediate objectives, namely, Algodonal and 27 de Noviembre, and, at 10 P.M., they took Loma Vistosa, situated 20 kilometers to the northwest of Picuiba.

On the 17th, in the afternoon, Yrendagüé fell into our hands, and at the same hour we entered 27 de Noviembre. By the 18th Villazón, 30 kilometers to the west of Loma Vistosa, was also occupied by our troops. On the 22nd we destroyed an enemy detachment of 1,000 men in Algodonal and we took that *fortín*, where we found a huge quantity of war matériel. With the taking of Algodonal we accomplished the complete fulfillment of the mission assigned to the Second Army Corps.

All those operations took the enemy off guard, and the disconcerting swiftness of their execution gave him no time to adopt any countermeasures.

With the taking of 27 de Noviembre, General Lanza, commander of the enemy troops of Ingavi, found himself suddenly cut off from his base of Santa Fe. Consequently he had no other alternative but to retire by the road to the north towards Roboré. By the 19th he had taken the first steps in that direction, and on the 21st he ordered the total suspension of the advance and the retirement of part of his troops.

The enemy Command in the Pilcomayo sector was obliged to send hurriedly several units to Carandayty and to the Parapití River.

I then had accomplished fully my strategic intentions. For the moment the danger in the Ingavi region vanished, and the enemy troops on the Pilcomayo front were materially reduced.

In my plan I had selected the enemy *fortines* 27 de Noviembre and Algodonal as points of our farthest progression because they were, for the time being, the extreme limits to which we could arrive with our means of transport. Our troops had now opened the roads towards their further objectives—the road to Santa Cruz and Carandayty-Camiri—and, since our possibilities improved to some degree, on the 23rd I ordered the Commander of the Second Army Corps to continue his march in the direction of Carandayty as far as the means assigned to him permitted.

On the same day, during the night, our troops occupied Puesto El Burro, situated 32 kilometers to the west of Agodonal; on the 25th, Ybamirante; and on the 26th, after a brief combat, Ysyporendá. By the 27th they were within 5 kilometers of Carandayty. But it was fated that from that point they should not pass. They had exhausted all their physical possibilities, and the enemy presented a more serious resistance in the range of mountains, easily defensible, which at that juncture is perpendicularly crossed by the road. Our troops were stepping upon the first foothills of the Andes, an achievement which to everybody appeared to be a dream.

While we accomplished that stupendous expedition to the north, on the fronts of El Carmen and Ballivián local actions were undertaken with great energy, intended to hold permanently the attention of the enemy towards that side. In Cañada El Carmen, where we fought under difficult conditions, in the midst of the thorny entanglements of the forest, we endeavored also to cut off more towards the north of our extreme right wing the road that the enemy had opened in the direction of Garrapatal. From August 20th our aviators had indicated the lengthening of that road and the danger of which was obvious since it was bound to intercept the only road of supply for our forces in movement in the far north. On the 23rd, at 1 o'clock in the morning, we succeeded in intercepting the enemy road under construction behind the Bolivian workers working at its head, whom we dispersed into the adjacent woods. But on the 24th our aviators informed us that the enemy had constructed another road in the direction of Siracuas as a bifurcation of the previous one and, in order to counteract this new attempt, I ordered the interception of the road from the south and I sent to Garrapatal all our available troops, including my escort, with instructions that they should endeavor to locate and curb the effort of the enemy on that side.

On the 23rd at 11 A.M. the President arrived by air at my General Headquarters in Camacho. On that occasion the President placed before me an unexpected question, the real import of which I had never clearly made out. He was very much desirous that we should take Ballivián at all costs. I agreed with him but I told him that we should take it as a consequence of an action in some other place and not by direct attack, even if it now appeared possible, since the enemy had weakened that front. Then the President asked me:

"And what would you do if I directly ordered the troops?"

I replied that I might follow one of two courses of action: Obey as a subordinate of the President of the Republic, the constitutional Commander in Chief of the armed forces of the nation, or request my release.

Thus terminated that strange episode. The President returned to Asunción on the 28th.

On the 25th I had ordered that the Third Army Corps farther extend its line in order to relieve the Eighth Division of the Second Army Corps, which would be moved to Cañada El Carmen where it was to confront the eventualities that the conduct of the enemy in that region might produce.

The struggle with the enemy, who was attempting to extend his road towards Garrapatal, and which we desired to impede, lasted until August 30th, on which date the troops that had been dispatched to Garrapatal, after truly marvellous scouting, discovered the head of the enemy's work, scarcely 20 kilometers from the road to Carandayty. Our forces occupied that position and thus ended the effort of the enemy. Therewith a grave source of anxiety for us disappeared.

On the same day our troops from Bahía Negra who co-operated in the general action took possession of Fortín Florida, which the enemy had evacuated.

The repercussion of our stroke upon Picuiba and beyond was so immediate that by August 20th we already had the impression that the enemy had retired a substantial part of his mortars and artillery from the Ballivián sector, and by the 26th we had identified in the sectors more to the north Bolivian troops of various regiments brought from the same sector. On the 31st the Commander of the First Army Corps reported that the enemy facing him in Cañada El Carmen had retreated all along the front.

My belief that the enemy would make a general retreat along the line from El Carmen to Ballivián was then reborn. In my diary of the 31st I entered:

> Lt. Col. Rolón left by plane carrying instructions to the First and Third Army Corps as follows: (1) The First Army Corps must concentrate upon road X;[52] (2) The Third Army Corps must take under its charge, little by little, all the front from Ballivián to Cañada Esperanza while the general retreat is proceeding[53] [in order to assemble afterwards, if the retreat also occurred in the Sector of the Third Army Corps, a part of its troops in the Alurralde region so as to undertake the pursuit towards Cururendá; and another part of the troops of the Third Army Corps to make the pursuit by the banks of the Pilcomayo River];[54] (3) The detachment of the Second Army Corps operating in the Cañada El Carmen sector must concentrate with the utmost rapidity upon road 5[55] in order to be transported towards Carandayty.

Happily the enemy army retired only part of his forces and the whole line along the Pilcomayo River did not move.

Strong patrols dispatched by us from 27 de Noviembre towards Ingavi in order to induce General Lanza to accelerate even more the execution of his compulsory displacement made contact with the enemy on the 31st at 105 kilometers from 27 de Noviembre in the direction of Ingavi; and at the same time other patrols thrown out towards the Parapití River encountered a small enemy detachment in Huirapitindy, where a maneuver was prepared in order to reconnoiter that region with a view to future actions.

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[52] That was the first road that the enemy opened from El Carmen towards the southeast.—J.F.E.

[53] Of course, this was based on the assumption that the retreat, as we had reasons to believe, would begin by the north. Logically it should have commenced by the south but the facts at that time appeared to indicate the contrary.—J.F.E.

[54] Those movements were actually accomplished two months later, after the Battle of El Carmen.—J.F.E.

[55] That was the road extended by the enemy towards the Siracuas-Garrapatal region and which by that time we had connected with the Garrapatal-Picuiba branch.—J.F.E.

Since the action of Cañada Tarija we knew that there was no water in all the section comprised between that place and Carandayty. The later discovery of water in Laguna Lafaye[56] had permitted the accomplishment of our movement upon Picuiba, but the wells of Laguna Lafaye were the only ones which supplied water to all our troops in movement towards Carandayty, towards the Parapití River and towards Ingavi, and they were materially insufficient to supply water to the troops to be employed in our endeavor to reach the road to Santa Cruz.

To be sure, as a result of the striking of water in Laguna Lafaye we organized detachments of well diggers who followed the army and worked day and night. But no further available sources of water were located in the sections afterwards excavated, though that failure may be attributed, to some extent, to the inexperience of our well diggers, who had not among them any professional experts, and to the inadequate quantity and quality of the tools at their disposal.

Owing to the scarcity of water our troops had to halt before Carandayty, and from that precise moment their situation became untenable because they were exposed to the attacks of the enemy. In order to reinforce their action I had assembled other forces in Garrapatal and more to the south, but we were unable to employ them owing to the lack of water.

We attempted, nevertheless, one more effort before succumbing to the tremendous reality with a reconnaissance in the region of the Parapití River. We pushed back the small enemy detachment defending Huirapitindy, which place fell into our power, and advanced towards the river; but we arrived at a zone of sandy dunes impassable to us with the equipment at our command. There were, then, no means by this time of intercepting the road to Santa Cruz. Our failure was a fact.

But without interruption, on the basis of that failure, I built up a new plan and applied myself immediately to its execution.

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[56] *Laguna* means lagoon, but Laguna Lafaye, despite its name, had no water until we excavated wells. It must have been a natural deposit of water previously but when our troops reached it for the first time it was dry.—J. F. E.

CHAPTER XV

Canada El Carmen—The Bolivian Catastrophe at Yrendague-Picuiba and the Shattering of the Second Bolivian Army

By our audacious movement towards Carandayty and 27 de Noviembre we had overrun the enemy to such an extent that now we were much nearer to the Bolivian department of Santa Cruz than two of the great masses of his army, namely, that under General Lanza and that of the Pilcomayo River. With sufficient means of mobility we could have invaded without any hindrance that vast and important region and fallen upon Camiri, a vital point from which a great deal of the fuel consumed by the enemy trucks and airplanes was obtained.

Meanwhile considerable enemy forces had been displaced from the Pilcomayo line towards Carandayty and the Parapití River, beginning in the latter part of August, a displacement which was one of our objectives. Owing to the impotent situation in which we found ourselves for the exploitation of the advantage already mentioned I resolved to prepare the return to my old plan upon the Pilcomayo front, that time under more favorable conditions in view of the relative weakness of the enemy in that zone. I summarize here the main features of my plan:

A retirement movement from the sectors of Huirapitindy and Carandayty which should be undertaken with the greatest possible slowness in order that we should have time to prepare and deliver a heavy stroke in the sector of Cañada El Carmen and fall upon Cururendá, with the design of encircling the enemy troops extended from Ballivián towards the north. Endeavor by all means to bring about the capture of Ingavi so as to paralyze for the longest possible time the initiative of the Bolivian troops who intended to proceed towards the Paraguay River or towards Pitiantuta, both of which possibilities were very dangerous for us. And, in order to reinforce our columns in the same region, institute the retreat of our detachment of Huirapitindy through 27 de Noviembre towards Ingavi, a point which that detachment should take in co-operation with the detachment from Pitiantuta.

On September 2nd our troops of Carandayty succeeded in intercepting, though painfully through lack of water, the bifurcation of the road from Carandayty to Boyuibé. Thus concluded that march of nearly 150 kilometers accomplished in the brief time of two weeks from Picuiba.

I applied myself forthwith to the preparation of my plan. I directed the opening of new roads, the connection of other existing ones, the excavation of wells in search of water and the construction of installations of all kinds.

Our troops in Bahía Negra worked actively to keep the enemy busy in that zone. In the first days of September they attacked and took the enemy *fortines* Castrillo and Vanguardia I and a detachment of the same troops marched from Florida towards Madrejón.

Due to the obviously embarrassing situation in which our scanty troops in front of Carandayty found themselves because they could not receive reinforcements for lack of water, the Bolivian initiative lost no time. On September 8th the enemy succeeded in intercepting the only road at the disposal of our detachment with its base. Although that detachment gave us by radio the exact situation and sought undaunted the most appropriate direction to extricate itself, I ordered the rapid transport of one of the regiments detailed to work towards the Parapití River and even other troops more to the side of Garrapatal, in order that they might co-operate in the re-establishment of the situation in front of Carandayty. The sending of those troops was also rendered necessary by the importance of the enemy troops employed.

At 9:10 P.M. on the same day the Commander of our detachment which was cut off reported that in the course of a few minutes he would evade the surrounding enemy, a feat which he accomplished punctually. The day following, the entire detachment deployed outside the circle. That movement was executed with such shrewdness that still in the afternoon of the 9th the enemy aviators were casting down papers inviting our detachment, which they supposed to be still within the circle, to surrender. But the reinforcements that we were compelled to send towards Carandayty created grave anxiety for us because of the difficulty in sending water while on their way.

On the 9th our troops of Bahía Negra captured the Bolivian Fortín Vargas, after a vigorous attack, and compelled the Bolivian defenders to retreat upon Vitriones. Because of that and other facts I considered for the second time the possibility of taking Puerto Suárez and I went so far as to call to my General Headquarters the Chief of the General Staff of Bahía Negra to study the matter. But soon I was obliged to put aside my intention, for the eternal reason—paucity of means of transport. Further, the financial condition of the country was passing through one of its most critical periods. I had just repeated to the Ministry of Defense my request for the acquisition of more airplanes, the imperative necessity for which increased day by day with the growing amplitude of the theatre of operations, and the Ministry advised me that a new order could not be placed because the treasury had depleted its resources. They also warned me that presently the situation would be aggravated still more by the menace that the League of Nations would declare an embargo on the sale of arms to the belligerents.[57] There were no means, then, to draw up plans founded upon new acquisitions.

In Asunción much pessimism prevailed due to the hostility of the League against us, the strained financial situation, the little probability for success of the diplomatic negotiations still in course, the announcement that the Bolivians were preparing an operation in which they had full confidence[58] and our retirement under difficult conditions from the Carandayty region.

After our detachment near Carandayty escaped from the first circle, I noted among our men of the first line little adaptation to the new class of maneuver imposed upon them by their mission. In war, as is known, a retiring movement is always one of the most trying. For the first time in two years of vigorous offensive actions, our troops were compelled to retire under adverse conditions and that depressed officers as well as soldiers. However, there was much reason. This backward movement was carried out in a vast wilderness completely devoid of water. The men received scarcely half a pint of water per head, per day, from the middle of August. In the meantime they had to march, maneuver, and combat incessantly during entire weeks without relief, against an enemy much superior in number and who at that period was particularly active. I was perfectly aware of the tragedy, but I had to become very stern to my subordinates because the retirement was being made with a greater hurry than that calculated in order to have time for the preparation of the decisive action which, in accord with my plan, was to be directed against El Carmen.

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[57] Upon the recommendation of the Council of the League of Nations, the Committee of Three—appointed by the same Council—since May, 1934, made consultations with a number of governments, members as well as non-members of the League, to the effect that an embargo be declared on the sale of arms to both Bolivia and Paraguay. As a consequence of that action, several countries, including the United States, banned the sale of weapons to the two South American belligerents.

[58] On the 8th the Ministry of Defense communicated to me that, according to information from Río de Janeiro, General Peñaranda was evolving a plan for a decisive action in the Chaco, the execution of which would be commenced anytime within ten days, and because of that Bolivia was trying to avoid the diplomatic negotiations in process.—J. F. E.

On the 11th I received the report that our troops from the side of Bahía Negra had entered Madrejón. Another surprising feat! They had made the journey on foot. In order to accomplish that they had to walk more than 100 kilometers.

On the 9th the enemy gave us a disappointment. Whilst we were working in El Carmen for the realization of our plan, the Bolivian troops, noting that our force was concentrated upon their wings, jumped suddenly ten kilometers to the rear and, naturally, nullified all our labor.

In the Carandayty sector the enemy did not lessen his pressure. He attacked our lines, trying to outflank us, and did not give us a single minute of rest.

On the 15th I received a letter from the President which advised me that Argentina was bringing pressure to bear upon us to accept a new formula for the cessation of hostilities, which at that time was being negotiated. It is worth noting here that that formula, proceding from the governments of Argentina, Brazil, and the United States, had been accepted by Paraguay without reserve. Bolivia objected to it, and now they were possibly pressing us to accept the modifications exacted by her.[59]

In order to keep alive the preoccupation of the enemy to the south of his positions, we undertook in the Ballivián sector strong local attacks which permitted us to move forward our line. In Cañada El Carmen we strove anxiously to re-establish contact with the enemy troops who had retreated, and we renewed the surveys concerning our movement to the north.

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[59] The formula referred to in the context was drafted by Dr. Saavedra Lamas, Argentine foreign minister. A summary thereof follows:

1) Bolivia and Paraguay ratify their will to renounce territorial conquests;
2) They declare accordingly that they try in the present conflict to acquire no territory belonging by just title to the jurisdiction of the other party;
3) Likewise they declare that any other controversy that might have led to the present conflict must be solved through a legal procedure;
4) Consequently, the Chaco War must terminate in the shortest possible time;
5) They will appoint representatives who will meet in Buenos Aires to agree on the cessation of hostilities and on measures for security;
6) They will be authorized to constitute a commission of conciliation as provided by Art. V of the Anti-Belic Pact;
7) If conciliation could not be achieved, the controversy will be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice.

Bolivia stated that the granting to her of an outlet on the Paraguay River below Bahía Negra was a *conditio sine qua non*, and the Argentine formula failed to accomplish its goal.

By September 17th we had massed an entire division in Quince de Abril, but we could not employ them because extraordinary rains rendered all movement difficult. The rains assisted us to solve the terrible problem of water in some sectors but in others they created insurmountable obstacles for us.

On the 18th our aviation reported the discovery of an enemy road in construction which, leaving Cañada El Carmen, went straight to the northwest and which already was about to reach the proximity of the *cañadón* of Lafaye. As a consequence we were compelled to detach troops to guard the surroundings of Lafaye and to impede any attempt of the enemy against the communication of our detachment in the Carandayty sector.

I ordered that by the 21st the small garrison of Pitiantuta should proceed on march towards the north with the object of reaching Ingavi. I had been advised that by that date the linking of our road with those of the enemy coming from Madrejoncito would be accomplished. But the garrison of Pitiantuta did not commence its march until the 23rd.

In the Cañada El Carmen sector, with our approach to the new line held by the enemy, a struggle rife with hardships was inaugurated among detachments of troops of both sides. In the treacherous labyrinth of the thickets were renewed those episodes by detachments of one and the other armies that cut their respective roads of contact and isolated each other reciprocally. That meandering struggle led us momentarily into a very disadvantageous situation so that in the second half of September we were obliged to rectify our disposition and to make a retreat of some kilometers.

In those days our aviators discovered a new enemy road which came from the west and ran in a straight line to Siracuas, the head of which was very near to the latter point.

All those incidents retarded considerably the development of our plan. Further, our means of transport were passing through serious crisis precisely in the moment when we needed them most in abundance in order to move our troops and their supplies to so many scattered points and to avert the danger which newly menaced Siracuas.

The enemy in the sectors of Carandayty and Huirapitindy, who previously had been relatively quiet, feverishly renewed his activity with a great number of troops. After again cutting from their base our troops defending Algodonal, they compelled us to abandon that point on the 22nd and to retire through the breaking of a circle by which they had surrounded us.

In Ballivián our forces continued their assaults. They made local progress and destroyed some enemy units.

On the 30th our detachment of Pitiantuta took the Bolivian Fortín Aroma. Another Paraguayan detachment dispatched from 27 de Noviembre attacked some troops belonging to the units under General Lanza in the neighborhood of Ingavi.

But our situation in general was not reassuring. Confronted by heavy odds on all sides, we had to cope also with an assortment of previous minor problems cropping out of the different phases of the struggle in so many sectors. Our means of transport were poorer than ever. The attitude of the enemy, first in Algodonal, and afterwards upon our line in Villazón, called for the utmost rapidity and the problem of water in the Picuiba region was always acute.

The department concerned of our General Staff verified by that time that the enemy possessed no fewer than 50,000 combatants, against 23,000 on our part. We knew also that the troops accumulated by the enemy in the Carandayty sector now fronting Villazón were no fewer than 14,000 men. But those troops, precisely because they had been transferred to that sector, paved the way for our action upon El Carmen and contributed to offset the disadvantages of our tardiness in its execution.

In Bahía Negra the situation remained stationary. Our detachment from Pitiantuta, on the other hand, after covering on foot, in a few days, 200 kilometers over bad roads, and after having overcome the opposition of successive detachments of enemy troops, took Ingavi on October 5th at 1 P.M.

In the sectors of 27 de Noviembre and Villazón the enemy momentarily diminished his activities, and we undertook some local enterprises in order to keep alive the enthusiasm of the troops. On the El Carmen front after our late retreat we, in turn, obliged the enemy to retreat. This retirement continued to the end of the month, so that the necessary stability for the execution of our plan was not then attained.

On October 1st I received a letter from the President in which, with much pessimism, after referring in detail to several points, such as the impossibility of buying 500 trucks, his lack of confidence in the League, etc., he concluded by saying that we were "in the worst moment." I replied on the 3rd entreating him to come to my General Headquarters. I intended to ask him that every sacrifice be made in order to purchase trucks rather than anything else and further to ask him to send to the front every available man in the country.

The President arrived at Camacho on the 6th. I explained to him the plan of operations the execution of which I had prepared, and, for the first time, he displayed skepticism. "I have not much faith in its success," he said. Thereupon I explained to him that our situation compelled us to take some energetic action. "We cannot move," I told him, "but we must not stay." I added that if our plan went along successfully, it would spell the end of the war. With that prospect before him the President appeared to react. When he returned the following day, he was in better spirits, and promised me that my request should receive attention, though not in the proportion that I desired because of the shortage of funds. The skepticism of the President was a proof of the extent to which our morale had descended.

On the 16th the President sent me the following message:

> Negotiations before the League of Nations are paralyzed because of our refusal to name a Plenipotentiary if he is not going to deal exclusively with the cessation of the struggle and means of security, which are opposed by Bolivia. We have the impression that the matter will return to America. The Uruguayan Government asked us today if we would accept a meeting in Montevideo in order to negotiate an armistice. We have replied that the mere suspension of hostilities could not be arranged without the advice of the Command. Please give us your opinion upon the advantage of an armistice and, if there is any such advantage, the conditions upon which we can signify our acceptance.
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> Sgd.: President of the Republic.

I replied the same day:

> In these moments an armistice does not present any advantage for us.
>
> Respectfully,
> Sgd.: General Estigarribia.

In the full preparation of an important operation in the result of which I founded the hope that we could achieve the longed-for peace under advantageous conditions, my reply could not favor an armistice as was proposed. Moreover, I had the impression that the enemy intended very soon to resume the initiative, an attempt which we had to neutralize at all costs because we could not take the defensive without incurring the gravest danger.

On the 25th I summoned to my General Headquarters the Commander of the Third Army Corps in order to give him precise instructions upon the conduct of his unit in the battle.

On the 27th I left for Picuiba, but in passing, I had an interview in Garrapatal with the Commander of the First Army Corps and the Commander of the Eighth Division, belonging to the Second Army Corps, units which would have charge of the operations in Cañada El Carmen. According to my diary, those units would seek the destruction of the enemy troops massed in that locality who "were about six regiments strong." I supposed then that the enemy troops amounted at most to 6,000 men. Later I proceeded to Siracuas and afterwards to Lafaye, where, incidentally, I found that the water of the wells was brackish and that of one of them was totally unfit to drink. I arrived at Picuiba in the evening and was informed that on that day there had been obtained in Yrendagüé water completely potable and in such quantity that it would solve the problem which had tortured us for so long a time. Unfortunately it was late; if we had made that discovery when our troops were before Carandayty, events would have taken an entirely different turn.

In Picuiba I gave the Commander of the Second Army Corps the most minute explanations concerning his mission. This was to be always one of retreat, in order thus to draw away more and more from his base the enemy mass of the north and to prevent it from coming to co-operate directly against our action in Cañada El Carmen. Again, in case of the success of the operation of Cañada El Carmen, the Second Army Corps should be in condition to collaborate there with another division—unless difficulties very powerful should intervene—in order to assure the destruction of the enemy forces which extended from El Carmen to Ballivián.

I returned to my General Headquarters on the 29th.

Due to the shortness of effectives and of mechanical equipment in general I arranged that the Chief of Operations of my General Staff should proceed to Asunción by plane to explain to President Ayala our necessities. Because of that action the President made another journey to General Headquarters where he arrived on November 3rd and remained until the 8th. The moment was of exceptional importance since everything indicated that the enemy was preparing to unleash some strong action which we were obliged to undo by outrunning him. In Cañada El Carmen we had succeeded in localizing the north wing of the enemy in that sector, and we also had discovered a breach in his line towards the south.

At dawn on the 6th the enemy made some demonstrative attacks upon our line in Cañada El Carmen; and from the 7th the enemy from the north commenced his offensive movement, simultaneously upon Huirapitindy and Villazón. He managed to intercept the road of our troops between Yrendagüé and Loma Vistosa, behind the defenders of Villazón. Some parts of our detachment of Huirapitindy and about 3,000 men of Villazón were surrounded. According to directives transmitted to them by radio, these troops calmly prepared a breaking of the circle, and by the 11th all of them extricated themselves and reached their road of retirement, with such success that they brought with them some 50 prisoners, among them a number of officers, and about 30 automatic arms of the enemy. Thereupon I addressed to our valiant troops the following message:

> Please transmit to the chiefs, officers, combatant troops and services of the Sixth Division and of the General Reserve the congratulations of this Chief Command upon the brilliant conduct which they displayed in frustrating the powerful maneuver of the enemy, much superior in number. This new sacrifice imposed by duty upon the Sixth Division and the General Reserve extols the valor and the heroism of the Paraguayan soldier.
>
> Sgd.: General Estigarribia,
> Commander in Chief of the Army in the Chaco.

I continued to be imperturbably devoted to the preparations of the plan concerning Cañada El Carmen, the execution of which would commence on the 10th. The immediate action would consist in establishing a circle around the enemy defenders of that region.

In the retirement movement of our troops from the north it was prescribed that the detachment of 27 de Noviembre would retreat towards Ingavi in order to reinforce in that area the troops that had marched from Pitiantuta upon Ingavi with the object of establishing there cover against any attempts of the enemy who was in possession of Ravelo and Roboré and who in fact brought to bear some pressure eventually.

In Ballivián the enemy also undertook some local attacks which were repelled; and then we counterattacked in order to keep his attention alive on that side.

On the 14th the forces of our Second Division, who moved by the south, took Fortín El Carmen, the headquarters of the Tenth Division of the enemy, which was charged with the defense of that region. (See Map No. 6.) The arrival of our troops was so surprising that Col. Murillo, the commander of the enemy division, found it necessary to flee to the neighboring woods when the first shots were fired, abandoning all his personal effects, which included important documents. Up to that time we believed ourselves to be operating only against the Tenth Division of the enemy, but, as we shall see later, our action took effect also upon the Ninth Bolivian Division under the Command of Lt. Col. Walter Méndez. On the same day we learned definitely that an open cleavage had occurred between President Salamanca and General Peñaranda.

On the 15th, as a consequence of our movement towards his rear, the enemy of the El Carmen sector commenced to retreat. My immediate feeling was that our maneuver ran an imminent risk of failure. Up to the hour in which I received the first intimation of that retreat our troops of envolvement had not succeeded in intercepting the communication in the enemy rear, and it was natural that I should interpret any backward movement of the enemy as an attempt to steal away. Further, the aviator of the only plane at our command reported on that day that large columns of enemy trucks were proceeding from Capiírendá to Strongest (Cañada Oruro) which appeared to indicate that the enemy either was receiving reinforcements or undertaking an evacuation, and either of those suppositions led one to assume that our intentions were discovered and that the enemy was taking opportune countermeasures to defeat them. But in the late afternoon our envolving troops from the north as well as from the south emerged almost at the same time upon the last of the roads of the enemy rear and thus fulfilled the hard mission which had been entrusted to them, each one having traversed by paths in the woods a distance of no fewer than 40 kilometers.

Nevertheless, the impression that we had failed still weighed heavily on me and at 7:15 P.M. I dispatched to the President the telegram transcribed below in order to comply with his desire that he be kept informed of all the incidents of the current operation, in the success of which he did not place much confidence:

> Despite all the difficulties today we intercepted the second road, but I believe we are late. We must not count by now upon a great part of the expected success.
> Sgd.: General Estigarribia.

On the 15th in the afternoon we took the enemy Fortín Independencia, where we captured prisoners and a tremendous quantity of war material. But in the enemy camp the situation was very different from that which we had conjectured. From the 15th, in the afternoon, the Bolivian troops had begun to demoralize when they realized that our troops appeared on their rear. One of the prisoners told us "that when they heard the cry 'Pilas[60] in the rear!' everybody lost his head."

The following day, the 16th, in the morning, one of the surrounded enemy detachments made a furious onrush in an attempt to break the circle; but, as always, the Paraguayans held their own; thereupon panic became general in all the Bolivian units and produced an uncontrollable rout. A few hours later the total surrender of the surrounded enemy took place.

At 5:30 P.M. on the 16th I directed to the Ministry of Defense the following open report:

> In Cañada El Carmen we have utterly destroyed the infantry regiments Campos No. 6, Ayacucho No. 8, Manchego No. 12, La Paz No. 40, Murguía No. 50; two battalions of the regiment Beni No. 16, one battalion of the regiment Cochabamba No. 20, one battalion of the regiment Rocha No. 31,

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[60] *Pilas*, the nickname given by the Bolivians to the Paraguayan soldiers. —J.F.E.

> the battalion Acre, the divisional squadron of the Tenth Division and the battery Bustos, capturing entirely all the personnel of chiefs, officers, and troops with their matériel and complete equipment to a total of 7,000 men. We have also taken 8 pieces of artillery. I shall forward more details tomorrow.

In the belief that in the El Carmen sector we operated against an enemy force of 6,000 men at most our action was accomplished with 4,500 men. All our Second Division of the First Army Corps, with effectives much reduced, moved by the south; and the Eighth Division, drawn from the Second Army Corps, operated by the north—an aggregate of six regiments; while deployed along the front, over a vast extension, were three regiments of the Fifth Division, which, in order to fulfill their assignments, had to leave many gaps in their line. But, behold, we captured 7,000 prisoners! From where did so many come? At the last moment the enemy received in the El Carmen sector a heavy reinforcement of an entire division under the Command of Lt. Col. Walter Méndez, and the trucks in which they came were those observed by our aviator and which we had misconstrued as a general retirement, to such an extent that I announced to the President the partial failure of our maneuver. Far from being a failure, it produced in Cañada El Carmen the destruction of an enemy mass of no fewer than 10,000 men, taking into account all the losses in the preliminary combats, the fugitives, and the like.

On the 16th I instructed the Commander of the First Army Corps to proceed immediately via Celina, Beatriz, and Carosi to Cururendá. But that could not be accomplished with the required celerity, among other reasons being that of the exorbitant mass of prisoners captured, whose number exceeded all our calculations and whose feeding, transportation, and surveillance created a formidable problem. Our victuals and supplies were scarcely sufficient to meet the necessities of our own troops, whose number I have stated did not amount to more than 4,500 men. Now we had to supply a number three times as great. That unexpected overflow produced among us a general upset. Here was a multitude half-maddened by thirst and hunger, who, when our first trucks arrived with water, threw themselves headlong upon the vehicles, in the midst of an infernal confusion, and the scant water just brought was uselessly spilled in the tumult. Our truck drivers and guards were compelled to fire some shots in the air to secure some order and to prevent themselves from being engulfed in that pandemonium. The following episode is here worth recording. A group of Bolivian chiefs and officers, prisoners, were present at the scene, and one of them, when he heard the first shots in the air, cried out to our soldiers: "Don't shoot in the air!

Shoot down those dirty Indians!" Those *dirty Indians* were his own soldiers.

Impotent to bring water to the place of concentration in sufficient quantity, we had no other alternative than to transfer hurriedly the prisoners to the rear. Accordingly they were placed in every truck available for that purpose, and they were carried at full speed. The tragedy did not end there. Many of the prisoners were so weakened by thirst that with the jostling of the trucks they lost their balance and fell upon the track, wherefrom they could not be rescued. Our drivers stated that it was not possible to stop because if they lost time in recovering the fallen the rest would die in the interval, and consequently they had to proceed with all speed with the survivors. Thus the road was filled with a ghastly line of corpses, for kilometers and kilometers, men dead from thirst and others crushed by the trucks which followed behind, the drivers of which could not see them in the darkness.

As a result of the victory of Cañada El Carmen the President sent me the following message of congratulation:

> To General Estigarribia,
>
> The heroic efforts of our troops has just been rewarded by a magnificent victory. The audacious maneuver conceived by you and executed by the chiefs, officers, and soldiers with vigor and tenacity, overcoming tremendous obstacles, culminated today in the crushing defeat of the invaders. To the defenders of the country I send on this day of national jubilation the congratulations of the Government of the Republic as an expression of the love of our people for their army and of the legitimate pride which they feel in its glory.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

I thanked the President by the following telegram:

> In the name of the chiefs, officers, and troops of the Army under my Command and in my own name I thank you for the message of congratulations which, in the name of the Government of the Republic, you sent to us on the occasion of the great victory of our arms in Cañada El Carmen. The success which we obtained was the result of the profound faith, enthusiasm, self-abnegation, and patriotism shared by the National Government, the Army in the field, and our admirable people, all inspired by their illustrious President. Respectfully,
>
> Sgd.: General Estigarribia.

The Bolivians contended that our maneuver by their rear in El Carmen was due to a map which fell into our power and thanks to which we were enabled to know the location of their positions. Certainly, in the afternoon of the 12th one of the patrols which guided our movement seized a map carried by the Bolivian Major Celso Camacho, which undoubtedly gave us some assistance; but when we took it, our movement was already in full execution due to the knowledge of the terrain which we had acquired by our own explorations. Major Camacho fell into our hands precisely when our movement was about to end.

My initial plan of operation was not modified upon the termination of the battle, according to an entry in my diary on the same day, the 16th. I ordered as follows:

> (1) The Commander of the First Army Corps must capture, as quickly as possible, Oruro [Cañada Strongest], Beatriz and Celina, in order that, being covered on the north, he can march to Cururendá with the object of encircling the rest of the enemy army which was in the south. (2) The Second Army Corps must continue to maneuver in retirement towards Lafaye. (3) The Eighth Division of infantry must concentrate upon Picada Murillo and there await my orders. (4) The Third Army must take under its charge all the sector of the Seventh Division of infantry and continue its action upon Ballivián.

In other words, I ordered the Third Army Corps to relieve the Seventh Division belonging to the First Army Corps, a division which was deployed to the south of the First Army Corps and which, up to that time, had taken no part in the maneuver; and I arranged that the Eighth Division should assemble at an appropriate point to await my orders as a strategic reserve of the Chief Command. In the first moment I had decided to employ the Eighth Division to the north of Cañada Strongest, in the direction of Capiírendá, as a cover for the movement of the First Army Corps toward Cururendá and, in a manner, as a menace to the enemy mass under Col. Toro operating in the Picuiba region, which I assumed would recoil. But Col. Toro's troops did not recoil; they persisted, rather, in bearing down upon our Second Army Corps, whose movement in retirement I had just confirmed. In view of the enemy's behavior I resolved without loss of time to change the mission of the Eighth Division and to transfer it rapidly to the crossing of the road which runs from Estrella northwardly with the other which, emerging a little more to the north of Lafaye, proceeds straight in a westward course. I ordered that the Eighth Division hold itself in readiness at that crossing so as to act toward the north against the rear guard of Col. Toro's forces.

On the 17th at 7:30 A.M. our troops captured Ballivián after a brief assault. The enemy commenced his retreat under disastrous conditions and set fire to the greater part of his equipment though our troops had time to save much matériel from the flames. Numerous enemy soldiers sought refuge in Argentine territory, throwing their arms into the Pilcomayo River.

During the night of the 18th the enemy troops of Cañada Esperanza accomplished in turn their retirement, and thus was consummated the shattering of all the Bolivian defensive system along the Pilcomayo River. Our troops occupied Beatriz, a point situated 30 kilometers southwest of El Carmen on the 20th at 8 P.M. and proceeded towards Celina and Carosi in accordance with their mission.

The crisis of the means of transport, as grievous as ever, handicapped greatly the development of our operations. From the side of Ballivián pursuit was all but impossible. From the 18th we had lost contact with the enemy, who retired at full speed. The fact that we arrived at Beatriz by the night of the 20th gives an indication of the slowness of our advance. As a matter of fact, in case we did not receive some important reinforcement in our means of mobility, it would be extremely difficult for us to proceed farther. And we knew that this reinforcement would not arrive, but we could not cease our pursuit.

By the 20th I had already lost any illusion concerning the surrounding of the enemy retreating from Ballivián. Since we had taken Beatriz three days after the fall of that position, its defenders had had sufficient time to escape. Further, under enemy pressure, we left Picuiba in the hands of the enemy on the night of the 19th, and retreated to Lafaye, a position where we were determined to make an energetic stand so as not to lose the water in that place.

On the 21st at 4 A.M. our Third Army Corps arrived at Guachalla and reported that it could not proceed farther because of the lack of means of transport.

The opportunity of clamping the enemy against the Argentine frontier once lost, I had to make another decision and, accordingly, I ordered our Eighth Division to proceed to the zone of the Second Army Corps in order to attempt the destruction of the enemy operating in that zone, who persisted in his pressure in the direction of Picuiba-Lafaye.

On the 21st I left for Siracuas because I desired to interview the Commanders of the Second Army and the Eighth Division to give them personally precise instructions upon the plan I had resolved to put in execution. I met them at a point situated halfway between Siracuas and Lafaye. After bestowing upon them, in a simple ceremony, the Cross of the Chaco in recognition of the great efforts lately realized, I ordered the Eighth Division to march upon Yrendagüé in order to deprive the enemy of the only source of fresh water upon which he could rely. Aside from the Parapití River and Carandayty there was no water in the region, but the water in Carandayty could be cut off if we arrived in time at Yrendagüé.

Oruro, key to an important network of communications, fell into our hands on the 22nd.

On the 23rd, early in the morning, I proceeded to El Carmen, where I decorated the chiefs who had distinguished themselves in the action which culminated on the 16th.

I ordered the Commander of the First Army Corps to transfer troops towards his right wing (north) as circumstances permitted, with a view to his eventual co-operation in the operation that I had just entrusted to the Second Army Corps. The First Army Corps would have to consider the possibility of an action towards Capiírendá.

Despite the waste of energy and the self-abnegation of the chiefs, officers, and soldiers, our splendid victory of El Carmen was destined not to yield all its fruits because we could not arrive in time at Cururendá. Our movements had not the necessary rapidity on account of the scarcity of means of mobility.

On the 23rd I returned by air to my General Headquarters at Camacho, and on the 25th I proceeded to Puerto Casado with the object of accelerating personally the dispatch of contingents of replacement and of divers elements with which we should commence the action in charge of the Second Corps. Our units were terribly reduced as a result of the actions which had taken place without interruption during the last two months. In Puerto Casado I drew contingents from all quarters, not excepting the personnel of the hospitals, in order to replenish our units and hasten the operations.

On the 24th the Assembly of the League of Nations declared an embargo on the sale of arms to Paraguay and Bolivia.

On the 28th while I was yet in Puerto Casado I received the intelligence that President Salamanca had been deposed and that he had been replaced by the vice-president, Sr. Tejada Sorzano. As a commentary on that sensational information I entered in my diary: "The great obstacle for the advent of peace has disappeared." The war of the Chaco by which President Salamanca thought to knock down Paraguay had rebounded against him with a mortal blow.

In the first days of December Carosi and Cururendá fell into our power, and thus was demolished the new line of the enemy defense, which extended from Cururendá towards the northeast as far as Puesto Bolívar. Our First and Third Army Corps prosecuted their movements slowly behind the enemy, the First Corps towards Capiírendá and the Third Corps along the Pilcomayo River. From Cururendá towards the north the enemy fled hurriedly to the opposite bank of the Pilcomayo.

On December 5th our Eighth Division set out for its mission to Yrendagüé starting from the point of assembly which previously I had indicated. The march was accomplished through paths opened as it advanced, in the midst of the high bushes of that region, while by the right wing the same unit sought to outflank the east wing of the enemy.

At the same time that that movement of the Second Corps commenced I ordered the garrison of Ingavi to launch a detachment in the direction of 27 de Noviembre in order to draw the attention of the enemy to that side.

After a prodigious march, which submitted our troops to one of the hardest ordeals of all the war, a handful of our Eighth Division arrived in front of Yrendagüé on the 7th and initiated the attack upon the enemy in that place. By 8 o'clock in the morning our troops overpowered him, taking the position and all the wells of water. On the same day our detachment of Ingavi fell upon the enemy defense at Pikyrendá, taking the position, and a little later proceeded farther.

With the taking of Yrendagüé all the enemy troops of Picuiba, totalling 15,000 men, were without water. On the same day, the 7th, they began to lose ground under our pressure. In the morning they abandoned their dead and their wounded and left in our hands prisoners and many different classes of equipment. At 11:30 A.M. Picuiba passed once more into our power.

The demoralization produced in the enemy camp by the taking of Yrendagüé and the menace upon 27 de Noviembre was immense. Every individual, a prey to panic, thought only of fleeing in order to save himself, and no one ventured to resort to combat. Under those conditions, naturally, there was no chance to organize any defense. The chiefs and officers seized the trucks for themselves, loaded the artillery thereon, and took flight with all possible speed to the Parapití River. The troops, thus deserted by their officers and driven to desperation, stampeded, and a horrible catastrophe ensued. Groups of them, terrorized, ran along the roads, under the torrid Chaco sun of those days of December, and thousands of soldiers fell dead of thirst, of fatigue, or of sunstroke.

We had consummated the total destruction of an enemy mass of no fewer than 15,000 men. We captured 60 mortars Stokes-Brandt, 79 heavy machine guns, 498 light machine guns, 590 automatic pistols, 11,200 rifles, 8,000,000 infantry cartridges, thousands of artillery and mortar grenades, supply stations, and complete hospitals. With the exception of artillery, the enemy saved no matériel from that disaster. It was for us such a considerable harvest of matériel that on the 17th I forwarded to the Ministry of Defense the following dispatch:

> With the rifles lately captured from the enemy we have sufficient for our present necessities. If it is still possible I suggest cancellation of contract for the acquisition of rifles in order to have more funds for other acquisitions.

On the 14th Col. David Toro, commander of the enemy Cavalry Corps which had been just destroyed in Yrendagüé-Picuiba, ignorant yet of the catastrophe, and believing that his troops were still in Picuiba, caused the aviators to throw upon that place some leaflets containing orders dictated on the 9th in Carandayty, 200 kilometers distant. He said, among other things:

> No consideration must be given to the fatigue of the troops since it is necessary to exert them to the utmost of their possibilities. One or two days of effort and sacrifice will not annihilate them. The enemy troops give us more than a sufficient example, in this respect, demonstrating to us that it is possible to live even months without almost any means. Yesterday they made a raid of nearly 40 kilometers advancing by path and on foot in order to attack Yrendagüé with the utmost audacity and energy.

As we see, Col. Toro paid in those preceding lines a just tribute to our soldiers.

Consequently, in less than three weeks, the enemy army, which, at the beginning of November consisted of 50,000 fighting men against our 23,000 was reduced to the half of his effectives and had lost all the advantages gained by his superior numbers and by his distribution.

In the operations of El Carmen and Picuiba, both exceedingly daring, I gambled everything on one throw in order to save one of the gravest situations of the campaign. If I had not acted in the manner described, the enemy would have had time to coordinate the offensive of Col. Toro in the direction of Picuiba with the other action towards El Carmen, and with his great superiority of numbers and equipment he would have placed the Paraguayan army in a very serious predicament. We were in no condition to counteract any such combined operation, and its consequences would have been incalculable.

CHAPTER XVI

On the Foothills of the Andes—Arrival at the Parapiti River

With the victories of El Carmen and Picuiba-Yrendagüé we cleared again our road towards the bases of the enemy and in various directions at the same time. But again we encountered the material impossibility of reaping all the fruits of our successes because of the eternal paucity of means of transport. Accordingly we were constrained to develop a plan which, as was natural, should be adjusted to the circumstances, even if the machines and the men had to be taxed to the extreme limit of their endurance.

On the north, by December 8th, we had taken Pikyrendá and we could have reached 27 de Noviembre the same day and captured all the fugitives of Picuiba, who were largely chiefs and officers, and continued unobstructed to the Parapití River and more to the west if we had possessed means of mobility. The defense that the enemy could have organized in Carandayty necessarily would have been very weak. With the mass of our Second Army Corps entirely free after the battle of Picuiba we were in condition to move wherever we chose and to bring about the destruction of the other troops with which the enemy might oppose our advance. We could have reached Villa Montes with two Army Corps, composed of victorious troops, full of enthusiasm, against an enemy in complete retreat. Santa Cruz and Tarija would have been totally at the mercy of our arms.

Yet all this could not be realized, and our plan had to consist in something less ambitious but which would enable us to continue the destruction of the enemy troops until we obliged them to make peace.

Despite so many limitations our two successive victories of El Carmen and Picuiba-Yrendagüé had a very material repercussion. President Salamanca was arrested in Villa Montes, and then deposed, on the occasion of a journey which he made to the Chaco to deprive General Peñaranda of his commission as Commander in Chief of the Army, because of the disaster of El Carmen. From the Bolivian point of view it was clear that the deposition of President Salamanca was a grave national error. People sometimes believe that certain changes foolishly made may perform the miracle of improving a situation overnight. But from the general point of view the fall of Salamanca indirectly favored the cause of peace.

On December 9th I transmitted to the commanders of our Army Corps new instructions, and on the 10th I left by plane to speak with each one of them and to expand further the said instructions personally. My intention at that moment may be summarized as follows:

To break, in the Carandayty region or more to the north, the new Bolivian disposition, which I supposed to be in the line of hills which runs from north to south and which passes by Carandayty and Capiírendá, and to come out upon the Villa Montes-Santa Cruz road so as to divide the enemy army into two parts and to engage each one separately. I decided upon that breach of the enemy line because we could not undertake an adequate pursuit owing to our inability to move rapidly, a condition which in those days was aggravated by the torrential rains of the season which began to pour all over the Chaco.

The directives given to each Army Corps commander follow:

To the Second Army Corps: Proceed with a strong detachment towards Santa Fe and San Francisco. Transfer the main body to Carandayty in order to take that position and to intercept the Villa Montes-Santa Cruz road in the Boyuibé region and more to the south.

To the First Army Corps: Take Capiírendá with your main body and co-operate with the Second Army Corps in order to intercept the Villa Montes-Santa Cruz road.

To the Third Army Corps: Continue the pursuit along the Pilcomayo River. Beginning at Cururendá take precautions against the enemy who commences to organize on the right bank of the river and extend as far as possible to the north in order to establish liaison with the First Army Corps.

It must be borne in mind that in that new stage of the operations the Paraguayan troops endured excruciating privations, apart from the exhaustion created by the battles incessantly fought during the past months and the fabulous marches which they had to undertake in order to traverse hundreds of kilometers without a single moment of repose. Our stoical soldiers had to move, then, with relative slowness, but nevertheless they always advanced and overcame on all sides the resistance that the enemy opposed to them. They had to live upon the resources of the territory conquered and upon the victuals taken from the enemy.

On December 24th our Second Army Corps arrived for the second time before Carandayty. On the same date the First Army Corps was in front of Capiírendá, and the Third Corps was upon

Ybybobó. On the 30th, after an arduous maneuver, the troops of the Third Army Corps succeeded in surrounding the Bolivian regiments Sucre and Aroma, who defended this post which fell into our power. We took there some 30 enemy officers—among them some Chileans—and 1,500 men, with all their equipment.

The lack of airplanes constituted a real tragedy for us. The distances extended more and more and the rains rendered absolutely impossible the use of trucks. Our Red Cross service had only one plane available for the evacuation of the wounded and the sick.

In the latter part of December the enemy faced us with a new defensive alignment which ran from Palo Marcado on the banks of the Pilcomayo River and passed by Capiírendá and Carandayty and proceeded more to the north following the first foothills of the Andes.

On the occasion of the New Year I received from the President, on January 1st, 1935, two congratulatory messages which said, respectively:

At 9:25 A.M.,
To the Commander in Chief of the Army in the Chaco.

On the first day of the year I send to the chiefs, officers, and troops of the glorious Army under your Command the tribute of profound admiration and gratitude of the Government and people of our country, together with the hopes that a just and immediate peace will recompense the immense sacrifices of our soldiers.

Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

At 11:45 A.M.,
General José F. Estigarribia,
General Headquarters.

In this day consecrated to new hopes, I convey to you my sincere and cordial wishes for your happiness and that of your family. In a collaboration of more than two years, in difficult circumstances and of responsibility before the nation, I have had occasion to value the greatness of your spirit, the temper of your civism and the qualities of your technique of command. To these exceptional qualifications our soldiers owe all the fruits of their immense heroism.

Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

I had sent to the President, at 8:50 A.M., a telegram which crossed the one transcribed above and which was to the following effect:

Dr. Eusebio Ayala,
President of the Republic.

On the occasion of the New Year I have pleasure in presenting to Your Excellency the good wishes for your happiness in the name of the Army at my Command and my own, and to join with these our sincere avowal of obedience and our appreciation of the sacrifice and the unlimited and exemplary abnegation that you have displayed in the great work of our country's defense in your high position as the Chief Magistrate of the Republic.

Sgd.: General Estigarribia.

On January 10th I made an inspection along all the front of operations. I went by air to Picuiba, from there by truck in the direction of Carandayty, towards the General Headquarters of the Second Army Corps which was still located in the neighborhood of Puesto Central. The following day I visited the Eighth Division, the unit intended to execute the movement by the south of Carandayty. From there I went as far as the line of fire in Ñuapuá, where, from the first time, I had the opportunity to contemplate the Andes from the Chaco.

In the morning of the 12th our troops broke the new enemy line with an assault and took Capiírendá. The same day I proceeded to that place where I arrived at 5:30 P.M., while the enemy was still bombarding the *fortín* with his artillery. As a consequence of the action of that day we captured numerous prisoners and equipment of all kinds. I made a rapid inspection of the place and passed the night in the General Headquarters of the First Army Corps. On the following day, after imparting several directions concerning the pursuit of operations and better coordination between the First and Second Army Corps, I left for Oruro where I had arranged to meet the Commander of the Third Army Corps.

I returned to my General Headquarters at Camacho on the 14th. Our troops in the sector of the Parapití River had destroyed on that day one of the enemy regiments and had advanced towards Santa Fe in pursuit, and at the same time detached troops towards Amboro, a position situated upon the Parapití River.

On the 16th the Paraguayan troops arrived for the first time at the margin of that river, which to us marked the historical limit on that side of our inherited Chaco. I made a note in my diary to the following effect: "The information that my troops had reached the Parapití filled me with pride and satisfaction. They had accomplished one of the objectives of my military life." After centuries a lost branch was grafted anew upon the old Guaraní trunk. The region of the Parapití River was populated by the same native race as our western zone, but all links connecting them with the mother tribe had disappeared. The Guarayos, Indians of the Guaraní family who have strayed to the Parapití in colonial times, received us like brothers when they heard that we spoke their language, although they were a little surprised to find that their brothers were white. They said to us that the announcement of an old legend of their tribe was being fulfilled, because, according to this legend, some time there would come from the east men of their own stock. Our arrival

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

The Parapití River.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Charata.

was to them a religious festival, and they displayed every hospitality to our soldiers.

On the 16th the Advisory Committee of the League of Nations resolved to lift the embargo on the sale of arms to Bolivia.[61] The institution of Geneva intended thus to leave Paraguay at the mercy of her adversary because our country had refused to accept their recommendations for the cessation of the struggle, recommendations which were a conglomeration of absurdities. This monstrosity of the League against a country such as Paraguay which was heroically defending her own national existence demonstrated to us once more that we were alone in the fight—but it did not weaken one iota our determination to fight to a finish.

On the 17th the penetration of our First Army Corps in the defensive system of the enemy became deeper and obliged him to make a new retreat on the front of Capiírendá. Our troops of the Parapití, meanwhile, succeeded in destroying other Bolivian detachments which opposed their advance, and captured two pieces of artillery. After a bitter combat they took Santa Fe on the night of the 17th.

The Third Army Corps, on its part, on the 18th, also broke the enemy resistance and captured Palo Marcado. The enemy made a full retreat.

Carandayty fell into the power of the Second Army on the 23rd at 10:30 A.M. and with that action the Bolivian new defensive system was disrupted. From that day we advanced in all sectors towards our objective, namely, the rupture of the Villa Montes-Santa Cruz road in order to split the enemy army. The rains and the scarcity of our elements nevertheless immeasurably retarded our advance and the enemy had time to organize and make himself strong in Villa Montes.

On the 23rd I established my General Headquarters provisionally in Oruro, with a view to transferring myself later to Capiírendá, where I definitely installed my station on February 2nd.

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[61] The Assembly of the League of Nations on November 24, 1934, adopted some recommendations aiming at the termination of the war between Paraguay and Bolivia, which countries were invited to accept them in turn. According to Article 12 of the Covenant, no member of the League could resort to war three months after a report of the Council (in that case the report embodying the above recommendations) had been adopted. Bolivia gave notice of her acceptance on December 10th. Paraguay made some observations and asked for some explanations before taking any decision. That attitude was interpreted by Consultive Committee of the League as a rejection of the recommendations, and thereupon it notified the members of the Geneva organization that the embargo on armaments as far as Bolivia was concerned must be discontinued on January 16, 1935. Paraguay notified the League on February 23rd of her withdrawal from the League.

On the 28th the troops of our Second Army Corps captured Boyuibé and Machareti. On the 29th there also fell into our power the locality of Tigüipa. In this manner we attained our object of controlling the road from Villa Montes to Santa Cruz, from the Parapití to Tarairí. A considerable stretch of the only road connecting the Bolivian department of Santa Cruz with the rest of Bolivia was in our hands. The enemy army was divided into two parts.

The moment had arrived to decide which of them we should attack first. For that purpose we had to proceed with the utmost rapidity lest the enemy should have time to reorganize in an efficient manner, but we were hindered by very serious obstacles. In the first place, the desperate scarcity of our means of transport. In addition, our troops were so fatigued that they could not go on without some previous rest. We had also to replenish various units, the numbers of which were very much reduced; and lastly, we had to train our officers and troops for the new type of warfare which we proposed to undertake. We had reached the slopes of the Andes, with which the Paraguayans were not familiar. From those first elevations fell deep gorges, totally unknown to us, in which the enemy had taken refuge and where we might be exposed to perilous contingencies. In a word, all the disadvantages of the terrain combined against us.

In the area between the Pilcomayo and the Parapití rivers we had succeeded in totally sweeping the Bolivians on the north side, where we obliged them to pass to the left bank of the Parapití; but not on the south side, upon the Pilcomayo, where they maintained an important bridgehead in Villa Montes, though they had to cross the Pilcomayo from Cururendá to the neighborhood of Villa Montes. In the first moment I thought about the advantage that it might be for us to suppress this bridgehead for better security. A direct attack, however, would have been unavailing because the place was in a very favorable condition for defense. It was necessary, therefore, to attempt the taking of Villa Montes as the outcome of an action elsewhere. Thus we tried to scale the mountains in Ñancorainza, in Taiguate, and finally in Boyuibé. At the beginning all was well, but shortly afterwards the enterprise failed dismally because of our ignorance of the terrain and the lack of training on the part of our army for that new kind of warfare.

I found myself compelled to dismiss the idea of proceeding against Villa Montes in that fashion, and I thereupon resolved to attempt the destruction of the enemy detachments which covered the left bank of the Parapití River with the idea of taking

Charagua and following rapidly by Lagunillas to Monteagudo in order to intercept the only road of supply from the side of Sucre and Oruro at the disposal of the enemy, the only connection, that is, between that zone and the high plateau. That operation offered the following advantages to us: In the first place, the enemy troops were still in the plains and our forces had acquired a great capacity for movement in the plains in the course of their march across all the Chaco. Secondly, with the destruction of this enemy group the Bolivian department of Santa Cruz would be *in toto* at our mercy and in Santa Cruz we could stir up discontent, which was simmering against the rest of Bolivia, and wrest from the enemy an important source of resources of all kinds. Finally, Camiri, a refinery of petroleum which supplied a greater part of the fuel consumed by the enemy army, would fall into our hands. Once that was accomplished the invasion of Tarija would be easy.

Moreover, the internal political situation of Bolivia was passing through a very delicate period, as a consequence of the unseating of President Salamanca and the problem of succession created by the expiration of the presidential term. A spectacular blow in the Chaco might have a telling effect. The supply of the enemy troops of the Parapití zone was conducted under harsh conditions, and in those days the Bolivian Government had carried to an extreme the rationing of their civil population, a fact that I deemed to be one of our great victories over the enemy and to be thoroughly credited to our Government and the responsible men who cooperated with them. Paraguay, a poor country, achieved the economic defeat of another country much richer than herself. All those circumstances induced me to envisage the invasion of Santa Cruz, even though it might strain somewhat our possibilities.

About this time there prevailed the general impression that we were approaching the cessation of hostilities since the diplomatic negotiations had regained a very vigorous boost, and any effort in the military field contributing to the acceleration of the advent of peace under conditions favorable to us would be justified. The facts that our treasury was in a state of near-bankruptcy and that the problem of replacing troops was aggravated more and more could not be ignored. It is sufficient to record that on March 8th of that year our First Army Corps in front of Villa Montes fired the last nine shells from its guns.[62] The replacement sent to Bahía Negra, when I ordered the veteran troops of that post to proceed to the principal front of operations, were boys of 17 years of age.

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[62] Owing to that fact I considered the possibility of bringing to the front of Villa Montes a naval gun of 19 centimeters which we possessed in Asunción and which had a good supply of munitions.—J.F.E.

On February 1st we occupied Camatindy; on the 4th, Tarairí, and we then advanced towards Cayguá.

On the 7th we launched an energetic action with the First Army Corps in the region of Villa Montes. Our purpose was to narrow this front and to push the enemy upon his principal definite positions, in order that we could keep him there while we operated towards the north, in the Parapití region.

On the 8th our Second Corps, in co-operation with the action upon Villa Montes, accomplished a *coup de main* in the sector of Ñancorainza. Our troops climbed up the mountains and succeeded in intercepting the only road in possession of the enemy from Ñancorainza towards his base, the village of Ivo. But on the 10th our forces were dislodged by a mighty counterattack of the enemy who occupied the dominant positions at the point of our interception. We suffered severe losses. Thus we paid for our inexperience in mountain warfare. Our troops had not taken the precaution to seize the neighboring heights but had remained in the valley.

On the 11th I departed for the General Headquarters of the Second Army Corps with the object of taking cognizance of the situation and to give instructions regarding the approaching operations in charge of that corps. We would make first an attempt in the Boyuibé region, in the direction of Camiri, and then in the Parapití sector.

On the 12th, after visiting the positions of Machareti and more to the north, towards Timboy, I returned by Carandayty to General Headquarters, which at that time were installed in Capiírendá.

At 2 o'clock in the morning on the 13th the President arrived at General Headquarters. He had made the journey from Oruro to Capiírendá by truck—no landing field had as yet been prepared in Capiírendá. I held with him one of the most interesting conversations that I record. I told him that we had opened the road to Santa Cruz; that we could wrest from Bolivia Santa Cruz and even El Beni; that we could also invade Tarija; in a word, that we could crush Bolivia in a very short time, but we needed equipment. The President replied it was impossible because our resources were depleted. I then expressed to him that at any rate something must be done, as circumstances would not permit our effort to be relaxed, except the advent of peace. The President said: "Peace will come very shortly; the war is about to end."

At that period I lamented nothing so much as our lack of aviation. With a good aviation service we rapidly could have prevented the enemy from continuing the war. One of the principal groups of the Bolivian army was massed at the bridgehead of Villa Montes, where it was supplied only by a precarious bridge over the Pilcomayo River; the other enemy troops were cornered among the ravines more to the north, to the west of Ñancorainza, Machareti, and Boyuibé; on the other hand, our forces were situated in the neighborhood of Camiri and Sanandita, the two principal sources of petroleum which served the Bolivian trucks. It is easy to realize that we could have overwhelmed the enemy army if the Paraguayan aviators could have bombarded systematically the few enemy lines of supply and, above all, their source of supply in Camiri. As has been seen already, we did not have even munitions for our artillery. The large trimotors of the Bolivians droned unhindered over our heads, in a continuous flight backwards and forwards conveying artillery and troops to the different groups of their army, and we had to see them pass without causing them even a scratch.

On the 19th I went with the President to Carandayty, and we passed from there to Machareti. Afterwards we returned to Carandayty and proceeded to Ybamirante from where the President returned to Asunción on the 20th.

On the 22nd I considered ended the series of actions undertaken to reduce the extension of the bridgehead of Villa Montes, and I resolved that the First and Third Army Corps should remain on the defensive before Villa Montes while the Second Army Corps commenced its actions more to the north. On Saturday the 23rd I departed for the General Headquarters of the First Army Corps, then in Palma Sola, where I also summoned the Commander of the Third Army Corps. I gave them the following instructions: The Third Army Corps should remain on the defensive along the Pilcomayo River; the First Corps also should remain on the defensive and extend itself to the north as far as Ñancorainza, in order to relieve the units of the Second Army Corps covering that point and Machareti; further, the First Army Corps should undertake demonstrative actions intended to give to the enemy, for the longest possible time, the impression that we were following up the attack upon Villa Montes.

I did not discount the gravity of the danger in lengthening the front in the manner ordered, because the enemy in Villa Montes was strong. But I was determined beforehand to yield ground gradually if the enemy passed to the attack, provided we could accomplish in good shape our action towards the north, an action that I considered imperative in view of the fact that the enemy had been mustering more and more troops in that region during the past few weeks. On the 24th I proceeded to the General Headquarters of the Second Army Corps, situated in the vicinity of Boyuibé. I explained to the Commander of the corps the resolutions recently made, and I ordered that his unit undertake with the greatest possible rapidity the prearranged action upon Boyuibé. I returned to my General Headquarters on the 25th.

The units concerned proceeded without delay to effect the replacements ordered; and, lo! on the 26th the Radio Illimani of La Paz broadcast the information that we had changed the center of gravity of our forces towards Boyuibé and the Parapití River and that we would not persist any longer in our attack upon Villa Montes, exactly as we had planned. The enemy radio repeated that remarkably correct information on the 27th.

Preparatory works were performed upon the Parapití River, towards the north, in order to establish on that side a cover under good conditions, while at the same time we were making ready to deliver a stroke in the region of Boyuibé, in the direction of Ururiguá. If that operation were accomplished satisfactorily we intended to march swiftly by Salinas upon the Boyuibé-Camiri road, with the purpose of destroying the enemy detachment of that zone, and, in any case, oblige him to retire under bad conditions upon Ivo-Cuevo, in order to safeguard ourselves in that region against possible further attacks while we were operating towards Santa Cruz. Naturally, if, with our initial operation, we destroyed that enemy group there would be opened to us the possibility of reaching Camiri by that side.

With our preparatory action upon the Parapití River on March 1st we destroyed an enemy detachment that occupied Tamachindy, and we took possession of that place as well as the village of Yuquy on the left bank. For effect, on the 2nd, in an open communiqué to the Ministry of Defense, I deliberately magnified that action, insignificant in itself; I desired also by that report to distract the attention of the enemy while we delivered the blow on Ururiguá. But the sensitiveness of the enemy was much more hypertrophied than we supposed, and, as a consequence of my announcement, the authorities of Santa Cruz hurried nervously to ask aid from the Government in La Paz and from the Bolivian Command in the Chaco. The impression that they received was such that they suggested the immediate removal of the funds of the branch of the Central Bank of Bolivia to the interior, and, despite assurances given to them by the enemy Command, the Government in La Paz found it necessary to send to the city of

Santa Cruz two members of the cabinet to assuage the alarmed public.

On the 4th I received a letter from the President in which he confirmed the exhaustion of our financial resources and the difficulty of making new replacements. He told me also of a tentative endeavor on the part of the Chilean Government towards a new mediation, but he said that he preferred to await the change of Government in Bolivia, which would take place on the 6th, before he made his reply.

Torrential rains had considerably retarded our action upon Ururiguá, but on the 8th, after brilliant assaults, our troops broke widely through the enemy line. Unfortunately a little distance from the point of their penetration they came upon an abyss which it was impossible to cross, and they were brusquely held up before it. During the ensuing days many attempts were made to overcome that difficulty, but in vain, so that on the 11th I authorized the Commander of the Second Army Corps to order the return of his troops so as not to expose them any longer to the dangers arising from their disadvantageous situation. With that failure we again paid for our ignorance of the terrain.

But without any loss of time we devoted ourselves to the execution of our action upon Charagua. Although we were in possession of Yuquy, upon the left bank of the Parapití River, the enemy still held the same bank from Ybysyryry to San Francisco.

In the following days local actions occurred on the front of Villa Montes which continued until the end of March. On the banks of the Parapití our troops vigilantly patrolled that zone and destroyed another enemy contingent in Yboporendá upon the road running from that point directly to the city of Santa Cruz.

Our front had widened considerably and since that situation could not be prolonged for much time, we were compelled to act rapidly. But the rains continued and the scarcity of means of transport greatly handicapped our action, and for that reason by the end of March we had to leave the left margin of the Parapití and abandon Yuquy and the area more to the north, in order to return to Tamachindy.

We also were passing through a period of grave crisis with regard to effectives, but since we could have no letup, I ordered the transfer to Capiírendá of the small garrison of Bahía Negra made up of troops of poor quality—many wounded and convalescents—the only reserve at my disposition, and Bahía Negra was consequently garrisoned by 200 boys of 17 years under the charge of the Navy.

From the 25th I transferred one of the divisions from the front of Villa Montes to the banks of the Parapití, an operation that terminated on the 30th. Thereupon we considered the manner of forcing the crossing of the Parapití River in the Amboro-Copere region, with Charagua as an objective, and also in the region of San Francisco, with the same end.

The President arrived at my Headquarters on April 4th. He expressed to me his optimism concerning the approaching termination of the war. In his judgment it would not be prolonged more than one month. "I am certain of this," he said. By that time the negotiations initiated in January in the Río de la Plata endeavoring to bring the conflict to an end were in full activity,[63] and the atmosphere was filled with the impression that the termination of the tragedy was imminent. That fact stimulated the preparation of the spectacular blow which we intended to deliver.

At dawn on the 5th we started the passage of the Parapití towards Amboro and Copere. Our forces succeeded in dispersing the enemy troops on the opposite bank, taking all their equipment and some prisoners. They then continued their advance towards Charagua along the road which led directly to that place.

The action upon San Francisco by the side of Casa Alta was stalled some days because certain difficulties occurred in the movement of our Eighth Division, which was being relieved by other troops in the Boyuibé front. During the following days our forces conquered the successive defenses that the enemy had aligned upon the Copere-Charagua road.

At the same time that we acted upon Charagua I prepared an action in the sector of Villa Montes with the First and Third Corps upon Itá-Ybaté, on the mountain, and also for the passage of the Pilcomayo River in the Carmen-Esquina region, with the object of menacing the enemy communications behind Villa Montes. But those actions were not carried out because of an incident at Boyuibé, which I shall describe presently.

The President visited the various Army Corps and on Wednesday the 10th took the plane in Oruro to return to Asunción.

The intervention of our troops of the Eighth Division cleared the enemy by the 14th from all the left bank of the Parapití, from Copere to the south. The enemy unit in front of our division retreated upon Charagua, to the vicinity of which our troops arrived on the 15th, and before midnight they occupied the locality. The enemy forces in the region Carandayty Moza who opposed the advance of our troops operating by the side of Copere were seriously menaced.

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[63] Those negotiations—ultimately bound to succeed—were jointly carried out by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Perú, and the United States.

But on the same day the enemy in Boyuibé furiously attacked our defensive line, though without serious result. On the 17th at 3 A.M. the commander of the Second Army reported to me by telephone that the enemy, from the south side, coming down by one of the ravines between Carandayty and Boyuibé, was marching upon the latter point, after rolling back our outposts. By 4:30 P.M. the enemy succeeded in intercepting the road between Carandayty and Boyuibé in the immediate vicinity of Boyuibé. That incident obliged us to modify our dispositions and to introduce a rapid change in the general character of our plans. We arranged that our troops of Boyuibé should retreat upon Mandeyupecuá, in order to act from the side of Ñancorainza towards Boyuibé; and that our forces from the north should come from Cambeyti also towards Boyuibé. For that purpose, on the 18th, I ordered the Eighth Division to return without delay from Charagua and I authorized the remaining troops to retreat slowly, according to the enemy pressure, upon the Parapití River.

In the Villa Montes region, likewise, we abandoned for the time being the execution of the operations which we had in preparation, in order to send more troops towards Carandayty, from where also we would act in the direction of Boyuibé and Mandeyupecuá.

On the 18th the enemy cut the road that leads from Mandeyupecuá directly to Carandayty, and, as a consequence, our Ninth Division, which occupied Mandeyupecuá, was isolated. The Ninth Division was requested to remain in Mandeyupecuá until the 21st because it had attracted towards it all the enemy troops; but it replied that it could not maintain its position on account of lack of munitions. I ordered it therefore to retreat by paths towards Carandayty, and thus was spoiled the intervention of the Eighth Division, which, reinforced by other contingents, would have moved, beginning on the 20th from Cambeyti, towards Boyuibé.

Since in the Villa Montes region we had withdrawn some regiments transferred to Carandayty, we remained there on the defensive, and we found it necessary to make some retreats because of the weakness of our defense.

In the actions just described the enemy suffered considerable losses. Their casualties were around 45 per cent, as we afterwards learned.

CHAPTER XVII

Final Operations—Termination of the War

Since our Ninth Division could not remain in Mandeyupecuá, but, on the contrary, had to escape therefrom by indirect paths, our Eighth Division, which should have acted from Cambeyti, was isolated and placed in a serious quandary. The enemy realized that and, immediately after occupying Mandeyupecuá, launched upon it his main body and succeeded in cutting off one of its advanced detachments, which unit opened a way through the enemy circle and emerged in safety. Subsequently the whole Eighth Division retired towards the region of Santa Fe, on the banks of the Parapití, with the enemy on its heels. The troops of our Sixth Division, engaged on the side of Ñancorainza, in conformity with our miscarried plan against the enemy of Mandeyupecuá, nevertheless obtained some appreciable advantages with the destruction on its front of a good part of the Manchego regiment. The troops who had been transported from the Villa Montes region and who operated from the side of Carandayty towards Boyuibé and La Victoria made progress under favorable conditions.

From the day of our retreat from Boyuibé the enemy multiplied his activities throughout all the latter part of April. He attacked repeatedly our positions in front of Villa Montes, where we were obliged to give ground little by little along the Villa Montes-Boyuibé road and finally to leave in his power the village of Tarairí. From the side of Charagua he continued to make our retreat upon the banks of the Parapití River more embarrassing, and from the side of Ysosog he pressed upon one of our detachments which had co-operated in our advance upon Charagua and had taken Joseravi and other places in that area and was ordered to join the other Paraguayan forces in the Los Maticos-Santa Fe-Casa Alta region. The enemy pressure was also felt in the Ingavi zone upon the Paraguayan column which occupied the Ravelo road, 20 kilometers from Ingavi.

Because of the incident of Boyuibé and the activities of the enemy referred to, the opportunity again presented itself to engage the enemy away from the mountains, in open field, and, accordingly, I outlined the following plan: Make ourselves strong in Ingavi in order to avert any dangerous action of the enemy in that region. Continue our retreat from the side of the Parapití River towards Puesto Casal and Huirapitindy with the design of drawing the enemy forces to the greatest possible distance and with the greatest attrition for him while we accumulated important forces in the Mandeyupecuá region which would then combine with those of the Parapití River in an energetic action from the south to the north commencing from Mandeyupecuá towards Casa Alta and Santa Fe. In that manner we would attempt the destruction of the enemy troops which had evaded our stroke on Charagua.

In order to execute that plan I arranged that the Ninth Division, which, on April 21st, had emerged upon our line in the neighborhood of Valle Verde to the north of Carandayty, should pass to a quiet zone of the Ñancorainza-Boyuibé sector, where it relieved the Sixth Division which was headed towards Ybamirante, from whence it should co-operate in the retaking of Mandeyupecuá.

During the latter days of April and the first days of May our retreat from the side of Casa Alta as well as from the north side upon the right bank of the Parapití was accomplished in the midst of most varying incidents. Fractions of our divers units were cut off during their retreat and then managed to join their principal body. Meanwhile I devoted myself to the transport of troops to the region north of Carandayty.

After successive retirements a new line of Paraguayan defense was established in the region of Ingavi at a distance of 11 kilometers from that *fortín.* I had reinforced the garrison of Ingavi with one more regiment drawn from the Parapití River.

On account of the increasing importance of the actions developing in the Parapití River and the Carandayty regions, and with a view to the execution of the plan I had just adopted, on May 4th I detailed the Commander of the Second Army Corps, who was in Carandayty, to take direct charge of the troops of the Parapití while I personally assumed the command of the troops which operated in the Carandayty zone.

In the meantime the diplomatic negotiations initiated in the Río de la Plata in an endeavor to bring the war to an end had progressed in such form that on May 11th the foreign ministers of the belligerent countries were invited to proceed to Buenos Aires in order to take part in the discussions. On the 12th the President requested me to send my Chief of General Staff, Col. Garay, in the character of military adviser to our foreign minister, Dr. Luis A. Riart, as long as the negotiations lasted.

On the 13th at midnight the first units which were to commence our maneuver upon Mandeyupecuá set out from Ybamirante towards the north, an action preparatory to the execution of our plan upon the Parapití. They marched by paths opened in anticipation and with all kinds of precautions taken to avoid the aerial observation of the enemy, and everything was arranged to widen those paths behind the troops in movement in order that our mechanical vehicles could also pass over them. In the Parapití region our retreat continued, always full of incidents.

On the 15th our Sixth Division fell upon the enemy road north of Mandeyupecuá and took by surprise several Bolivian installations. It then proceeded rapidly towards its objective, Fortín Mandeyupecuá, and on the 16th at 10:30 A.M. captured it, after having assaulted and overpowered successively the lines of enemy resistance. At the same time other forces of this Paraguayan unit which were operating towards the north defeated some enemy detachments of the Castrillo and Manchego regiments and reached the dry bed of the Cuevo River. The march of our Sixth Division was one of the most notable feats of the war—only by the extraordinary mettle of its troops, defying the torture of thirst and of hunger, could the covering of that tract have been achieved. The regiment Valois Rivarola, which spearheaded for the main body, was decorated as a reward for its conduct.

The President arrived at my General Headquarters on the 19th. By the 21st the road running directly from Carandayty to Mandeyupecuá by Puesto Victoria was cleared of enemies, and on the north of Mandeyupecuá we were in possession of the dry bed of the Cuevo River, which flows from west to east and which was the starting point of our action upon the Parapití. On the same day our troops of the Parapití were deployed from north to south, with the center of the line five kilometers to the west of Puesto Casal, where we already had assembled all the troops of that sector in good condition to await the enemy. We continued to assemble more troops drawn from the First and Third Army Corps to the south of the Cuevo River, where I organized the main body for the fulfillment of the maneuver.

On the 23rd the President left Capiírendá and returned to Asunción. On the same day, after bidding good-bye to the President, I installed my P.C. in Carandayty in the only two-storied house in the locality. At 12:50 P.M. I continued my journey to the line. At midnight I arrived at Valle Verde, where I gave the Commanders of the Third and Sixth Divisions some clarifying instructions upon the initiation of the movement to the north of the Cuevo River, the immediate object of which was to sweep away the enemies from that region and follow rapidly by Yoay to the Parapití in the direction of Casa Alta. I passed then to

Ybamirante where I inspected the troops which had been accumulated in that region, and I returned during the afternoon to my P.C. of combat in Carandayty.

On the 24th our troops commenced by our right the passage to the opposite bank of the dry bed of the Cuevo River and rolled back the enemy defense in a northerly direction. At dawn of the 25th forces belonging to our Sixth Division, in their turn, erupted upon the opposite margin of the Cuevo along the Mandeyupecuá-Yoay road and, after overcoming the resistance of the enemy, continued their march until they arrived within two kilometers of Yoay, where they were checked by numerous Bolivian troops.

In view of our retreat from the margins of the Parapití the native Guarayos of the region decided to accompany our troops, and that meant a considerable overloading of our trucks, which we did not possess in sufficient quantities. I ordered that the Indians should be evacuated at Yrendagüé, the only source of water in that zone. As the evacuation was carried out in full daylight, the enemy aviation was not slow in discovering it, and bombarded the column in movement. The enemy no doubt interpreted that movement of men towards our rear as a retreat of our troops to the south, and probably on that assumption he resolved to move his forces from the north side and from the west in a concurrent direction in order to outflank the two wings of our defense of Puesto Casal and to intercept the only road which lay behind our line of defense. But we, far from having decided to retreat, continued to accumulate elements and to augment the strength of our units of movement, which, by that time, numbered four regiments and which were destined to co-ordinate their action with the forces operating upon the Cuevo River. Nevertheless, the advance of the enemy columns from the right and from the left obliged us to postpone for the time being our movement on that side in order previously to repulse these columns. By the 26th we had consummated their destruction, and on that occasion I sent to Asunción one of the longest reports of the campaign, desiring to impress the mediating conference at Buenos Aires.

The following dispatch from the President, which I received at 5:30 on the 28th, proved that I had fully attained my purpose:

> At the instance of Brazil mediation proposed: Truce during the stay of Foreign Ministers in Buenos Aires, maintaining present military positions. Armistice under conditions which are to be fixed in the course of the truce so as to permit the belligerents with the minimum of sacrifice to await the suspension of hostilities with the guarantees exacted by the belligerents. We have replied that truce is dangerous if the positions of the armies on the terrain are not previously determined, and we have suggested the sending

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Ingavi, where the last battle of the Chaco War was fought.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Tigüipa.

> of a military commission to the Chaco, accepting armistice of eight days to allow the commission to perform its work. Impression is good. We believe that recent actions have had much influence.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

After defeating six enemy regiments in the Parapití and as many others upon the Cuevo, I ordered that our preparations for the decisive action should be speeded up; but further, in view of the possibility that a sudden truce could be arranged, as anticipated in the President's telegram, I likewise ordered the consolidation of our positions in all the sectors.

The enemy meanwhile calmly transported troops and equipment of all kinds in his great trimotors from Villa Montes to Charagua, and we impotently observed that traffic. We did not possess a single plane in those days to encumber the enemy aviation. On one occasion I noticed that two Bolivian trimotors made six journeys each in a single day.

On the 29th I noted in my diary:

> Up to 5:30 P.M. today this has been the quietest day that has transpired since April 17th last. It is perhaps the waiting for peace, which appears to be approaching rapidly.
>
> The Commander of the First Army Corps arrived at my P.C., who came to inform me of the situation of his troops and to seek information. That concerning peace, which I gave to him, made him very happy.
>
> Everybody perceives that peace is imminent and all are content. Evident weariness of the war.
>
> In Asunción they expect the signing of a truce in the Chaco at any moment.

However, on the following day, the 30th, the enemy furiously attacked our advanced posts of Ingavi, a sector in which we were somewhat weak; for that reason I decided to send immediately more troops to that theater of operations; and I ordered that the most obstinate resistance be offered to the enemy, irrespective of sacrifices. I said textually to the Commander of our troops in that region: "Ingavi must not fall into the hands of the enemy." The reinforcements for that sector were forwarded at the expense of the forces of the Parapití zone, where we were consequently obliged to suspend our projected action. The enemy continued attacking in Ingavi in the ensuing days, but our troops, scarcely 200 men, held out with splendid tenacity.

From May 30th, according to communications transmitted to me by the Government in Asunción, the Bolivians commenced to place difficulties in Buenos Aires in the way of agreeing upon a protocol of peace. On June 1st the possibility was announced of a deadlock. Bolivia insisted upon a mere truce in order to settle the fundamental question—definition of boundaries in the Chaco—while we dwelt upon the definite cessation of the struggle with securities that it would not be renewed so that the discussion upon the fundamental question could be conducted in an atmosphere of actual peace. It appeared that the Commander in Chief of the Bolivian troops in the Chaco had prepared a countermaneuver in which he had much faith, and that the Bolivians desired to improve their military situation as much as possible previous to accepting any suspension of hostilities.

On June 3rd the President sent to me the following message:

> Mediating group proposes plan pacification consisting cessation hostilities with measures of security and meeting conference of peace to settle fundamental questions. While we were examining the plan Bolivian delegation communicated to the mediators absolute rejection of the plan insisting upon their known thesis. Foreign Minister Elío made a statement in almost violent terms. Situation created appears to me of difficult solution but some mediators are already working upon new formula with the object of appeasing Bolivia. Our attitude will be firmer taking into consideration danger implied by any concession to the enemy.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

In view of the above announcement I hastened still more our preparations against the enemy of Ingavi. He had been checked already but the struggle continued, and we desired to bring about the destruction of this Bolivian column as a means of compelling Bolivia to make peace. On the 4th our troops intercepted the road from Ingavi to Ravelo, behind the enemy positions. By the 6th the enemy forces fought under very difficult conditions. On the 8th the curtain fell, and their fate was sealed. At 11:30 A.M. I sent to the Ministry of Defense the following open report:

> In the Ingavi sector we have totally destroyed the Sixth Division of the Bolivian Third Army Corps capturing prisoners the commander, Col. Julio Bretel; the commander of the Florida regiment, Major Marcial Menacho Paz, the commander of the Ballivián regiment, Major Humberto Bernzt Vivanco [Chilean], 20 officers, hundreds of surviving soldiers, and all the war matériel of this great unit.

Everything induced us to suppose that that report produced an instantaneous effect on the enemy because the same day, the 8th, at 7:18 P.M., the President informed me:

> They are reaching in Buenos Aires an accord upon principal points of armistice, cessation of hostilities, measures of security, and procedure for solving difference. Under discreet form our thesis triumphs. Agreement contemplates armistice of eight days counting from the time that the neutral military officers are in the field of operations ready to define the line of separation of the armies. We believe that the change on the part of Bolivia is produced because of the Ingavi action, which fills us with happiness and pride. Your Command will act in accord with this information.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

On the 9th I amplified my report of the previous day with new details upon the number of prisoners and the enormous quantity of arms, munitions, and elements of all kinds taken from the enemy. I deliberately painted this new Bolivian misfortune, which was the last of the war, in gloomy colors.

On the same day the President sent to me the following message of congratulation:

> Once again in the course of the campaign in the Chaco the capacity of leadership and the heroism of the troops have just converted a dangerous enemy menace into a brilliant victory by our forces. Please accept and transmit to the brave men of Ingavi my cordial felicitations.
>
> Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala,
> President of the Republic.

I replied to the President:

> With profound emotion I received and transmitted to the heroes of Ingavi the cordial congratulations of the President of the Republic. This victory was made possible thanks to the fact that the Government of the nation had devoted all its energies and all its efforts to strengthening the army in the Chaco. Please accept on their behalf the expression of our gratitude.
>
> Sgd.: General Estigarribia.

From the 9th I persisted in a relentless pursuit towards Ravelo of the enemy detachments which had escaped from the disaster of Ingavi.

In the latter days of May and the first days of June there occurred a rising of the rivers of the north, which inundated all the zone occupied by our forces in the region around Vitriones. The waters rose to such a level that the Commander of those forces requested authorization to retreat, because his situation might become hopeless. Yet, in view of the diplomatic attempts I had to refuse that request, and I ordered that the troops maintain themselves in the positions reached at the cost of any sacrifice. They then had to improvise platforms on the trees in order to survive, and their supplies were obtained from canoes drawn by oxen because to cross that vast extension covered with water but full of high bushes it was impossible to employ rowboats or motorboats, and neither could we make the transport on the backs of mules.

Peace was imminent. We caught information from the radio broadcast from Buenos Aires, and thus we learned that the progress made towards the cessation of the war was advanced materially.

On the 12th at 9:40 A.M. the President conveyed to me the great news with the following message:

> Last night bases for the cessation of hostilities and the meeting of a peace conference were agreed upon, and a protocol must be signed today, June 12th, at noon, in the presence of the Argentine President. In order to terminate

immediately the struggle it was agreed to cease firing within 48 hours from the signing of the protocol. Determination of the line of separation of the armies will be made by the Military Commission which will leave today by plane from Buenos Aires and arrive tomorrow at the latest at the front. Ratification of the protocol by Congress will take place within ten days.

Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

I received later the following telegram from the Ministry of Defense:

The Executive Power submitted to Parliament a bill accompanied by the following message:

"To the Honorable Congress of the Nation:

"I have the honor to submit for the consideration of Your Honors the accompanying bill creating the rank of General of the Army in the Army Register and naming as an officer of that rank the General of Division José Félix Estigarribia. The object of this bill is to reward with an exceptional promotion the illustrious military chief who has commanded the Army during the campaign of the Chaco. A democracy honors itself by recognizing and appreciating the merits of those citizens who deserve well of the country. We should not wait until they pass away nor should we limit the national acknowledgement to honorific titles. General Estigarribia, because of his intellectual qualifications, his character, and his youth is called upon to render eminent services, for a long time, to the Nation. It is our duty to exempt him from any material necessity as up to today he has sacrificed everything with entire generosity to the well being of his country. General Estigarribia is a Paraguayan hero of the highest order. God guard Your Honors.

Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala, Víctor Rojas."

On the same day, the 12th, I sent to the President the homage of the army in the field:

June 12, 1935,
To the President of the Republic,
Dr. Eusebio Ayala,
Asunción.

In moments when the struggle comes to an end, the Army in the Chaco, through me as a medium, pays its homage of admiration and respect to the head of the Government and to the man who made possible the victory and the salvation of the homeland by his bright intelligence, his unbreakable will and his greatness of soul. To him [we owe] our eternal gratitude as Paraguayans and soldiers.

Sgd.: General Estigarribia,
Commander in Chief of the Army
in the Chaco.

The President replied at 12 o'clock, on the 13th, with the following:

I receive with profound satisfaction the radiogram in which the Commander in Chief, in the name of the Army in the field, appreciates the co-operation of the Government in the national defense. The close understanding and the perfect co-ordination which, during the course of the war, has been maintained between the civil Government and the military Command, constitutes one of the most meritorious features of the patriotic spirit that has prevailed throughout the nation, to which we owe the accomplishment of a glorious and just peace.

Sgd.: Eusebio Ayala.

Meanwhile the members of the neutral Military Commission charged with putting into operation the clauses of the accord of June 12th relative to the cessation of the war left by airplane Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Río de Janeiro and Lima, respectively, having as their destination the Chaco.

On the 14th in fulfillment of the Protocol of Peace, at 8 A.M., I directed by radio the following order to the Paraguayan Army:

Radiogram No. 5331.

To the Commanders of the Army Corps and Units depending directly upon the Chief Command.

Today, June 14th, 1935, at noon, cease fire on all fronts. The troops will halt at the hour indicated in their places already reached, where they will await further orders.

Sgd.: Estigarribia,
Commander in Chief of the Army in the Field.

At 12 o'clock on that day, the 14th, our troops of Ingavi, who were marching towards Ravelo, halted in the neighborhood of the latter place. (See Map No. 7.) The Bolivians, with a design difficult to understand, opened a rabid cannonade on all the line of fire from 11 to 12 o'clock.

The final hour of the tragedy had struck. I then arranged that our few airplanes should be decorated with black and white flags and that they should undertake a flight and drop flowers upon the dead of both belligerent armies.

At 12 o'clock precisely I transmitted by radio the following proclamation to our brave Army:

To the chiefs, officers, noncommissioned officers and soldiers of the Army in the Field:—

With profound emotion I announce to you the termination of the war. In three years of warfare you have proved yourselves worthy of your ancestors by accomplishing a work which future generations will record with pride. May God inspire them always with your example. You have conquered in unforgettable battles a tenacious enemy and a hostile nature. The nation will not forget those who fought and suffered in order to save it from mutilation and dishonor. If any people deserve to be great because of the intelligence and the valor and the sacrifice of their sons I hold that our people are called to the highest and most noble destinies. On this happy day I recall especially with a sad heart our brothers who fell from Pitiantuta to Charagua. To them belongs our homage, and let us be true in all time to the sacred ideals that led them to death in the fullness of their youth.

Chiefs, officers, noncommissioned officers, combatant soldiers, and those of the services: To all my gratitude as a Paraguayan and as a soldier. I shall carry to the tranquility of my home, as the greatest honor of this war, the fact of having been your Commander in Chief.

Sgd.: José Félix Estigarribia,
Commander in Chief of the Army in the Field.

After three years less one day, the cannon in the Chaco ceased to speak its language of iron.

THE END

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Additional Illustrations

The following pictures were taken immediately after the termination of the Chaco War, on the occasion of the meeting of the Commanders in Chief of the two contending armies, Estigarribia and Peñaranda, a meeting which was arranged by the Neutral Military Commission in charge of the fulfillment of the armistice terms between Bolivia and Paraguay and also on the occasion of the celebration of the end of the war in the Paraguayan capital.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

General Enrique Peñaranda (right), Commander in Chief of the Bolivian army, is introduced to Marshal Estigarribia (left) by General Martinez Pita (center), Argentine representative and president of the Military Commission which arranged the armistice between the two contending armies.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

The meeting of the two formerly enemy commanders takes a cordial turn.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Marshal Estigarribia leads the way to his Headquarters in company with General Pañaranda and the members of the Neutral Military Commission.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

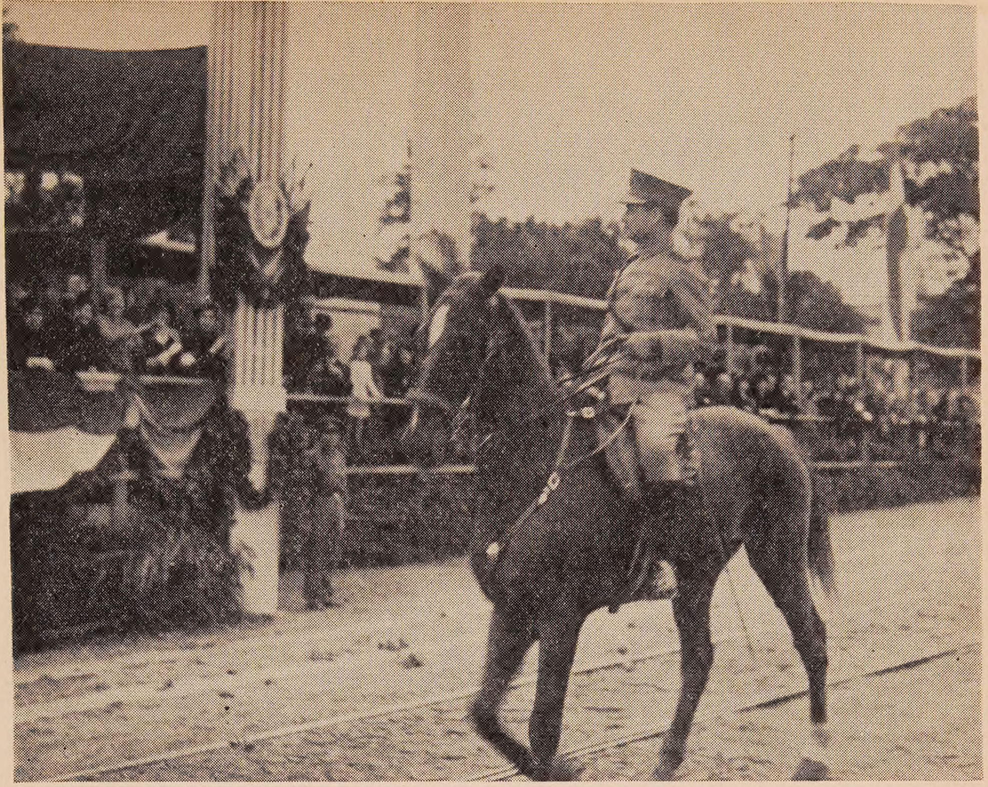
A jovial toast by the Bolivian and Paraguayan Commanders.

(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Estigarribia and Peñaranda in the field headquarters of the former.

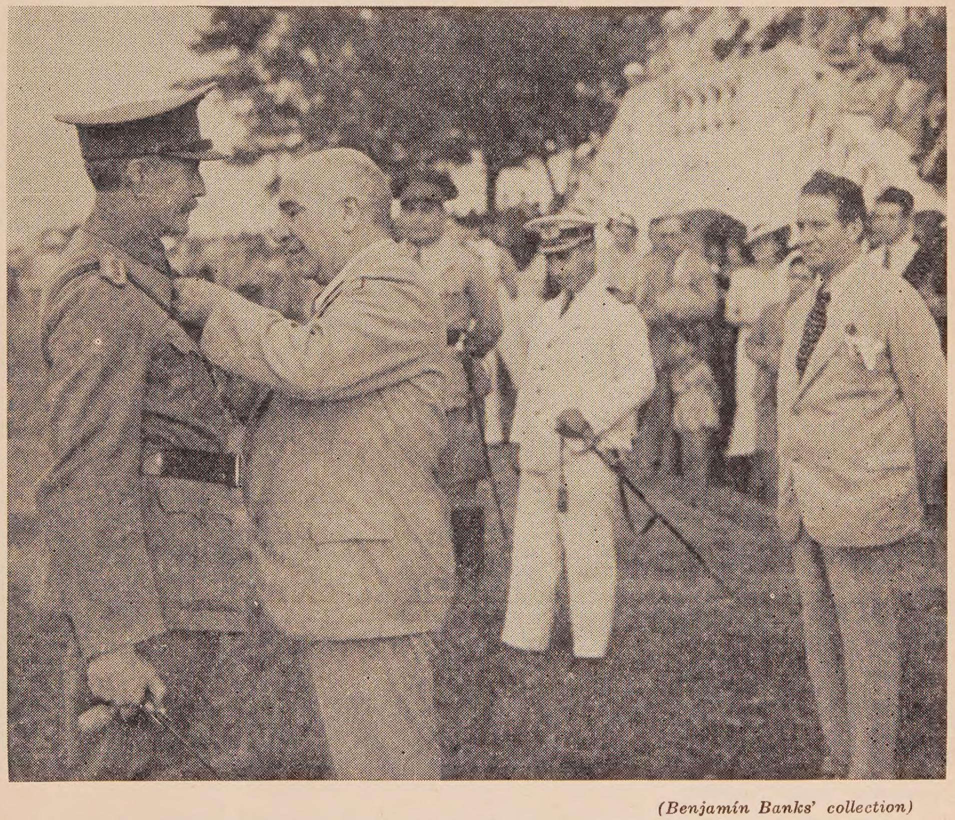
(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Estigarribia and Peñaranda shortly before bidding good-bye to each other.



(Benjamín Banks' collection)

Marshal Estigarribia leading the Victory Parade in Asunción at the termination of the Chaco War.



(Benjamín Banks' collection)

President Ayala bestowing the Cross of the Chaco upon Colonel Francisco Brizuela. Standing behind the President is Minister of Finance Benjamín Banks.

(*Benjamín Banks' collection*)

The Paraguayan people celebrating the end of the war in a public demonstration in Asunción.

(*Benjamín Banks' collection*)

Students of the primary schools join the celebration of the end of the war in the Paraguayan capital.